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EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

THOMAS GREENFIELD

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES
ON THE
V., VI., AND VII. CHAPTERS OF THE EPISTLE
TO THE ROMANS.

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

ON THE

V., VI., & VII. CHAPTERS OF THE
EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

BY

THOMAS GREENFIELD.

WITH INTRODUCTION

BY

COLIN C. M'KECHNIE.



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INTRODUCTION.

To the readers of the CHRISTIAN AMBASSADOR Mr. Greenfield is well and favourably known as a Scripture expositor. From the commencement of that Quarterly, twenty years ago, scarcely a number has appeared without an expository article from his fertile pen. To none of those who have so loyally sustained the AMBASSADOR by their literary services is it more largely indebted, and of none have its readers formed a higher or more kindly appreciation. Such, indeed, has been the favourable impression produced by his contributions, and the consequent high opinion of his gifts for Scripture exposition, that he has frequently been solicited by private individuals to publish a separate volume of his expository discourses. However much he may have been gratified with these solicitations, he has hitherto shrunk with characteristic modesty from independent authorship. Happily, the

Ministers' Association of the Sunderland District, in its Sessions of 1874, took up the question, and requested him by a hearty and unanimous vote, to favour his friends and the public with a volume of expositions—pledging itself to secure him against all pecuniary risk. This friendly pressure overcame his reluctance. What he had denied to private solicitation he yielded to the united request of his brethren.

In the chapters here selected for exposition, there is perhaps, a greater number of "things hard to be understood" than in any other equal portion of Paul's writings. Their general import is, indeed, plain enough to readers of average intelligence; but ever and anon forms of speech and modes of argument occur which even the most learned and thoughtful find difficult to construe. Nor is this surprising, when it is considered that some of the subjects discussed impinge upon the sphere of the infinite, and are matters of pure revelation. Taking into account the limits of human thought, it is, perhaps, impossible by any kind of speech, however precise and lucid, to render such abstruse subjects so intelligible that they can be fully grasped by the mind of man. Their apprehension is possible, their comprehension impossible.

We opine, however, that the difficulties which perplex and stagger the reader are due more to the style of the author than to the nature of his themes. On practical matters Paul writes with a plainness and incisiveness which impress his meaning with the exactness of a die. On doctrinal matters, however, while he is copious, forceful, and elevated, he is withal involved, parenthetical, and elliptical, rendering it extremely difficult to trace the course of his thought, or the links of his argument. The peculiarities of style which obscure his meaning are nowhere more apparent than in these chapters, devoted, as they are, almost exclusively to doctrinal discussions ; and it is no doubt owing to this cause, as well as to the fundamental importance of the doctrines discussed, that no other portion of his writings has attracted the attention and secured the services of a greater number of accomplished expositors.

As to how Mr. Greenfield acquits himself in the difficult task here undertaken, there can only be one opinion among competent and impartial judges. It would, perhaps, be too much to say that he clears up every obscurity, and harmonizes every seeming discordance, and renders the conclusiveness of Paul's

reasoning free from all plausible objection ; but he certainly contributes in no small degree to a better understanding of this section of the sacred volume, and to a readier reception of its doctrinal teachings. Unquestionable proof is furnished of such expository faculty and resource as render Mr. Greenfield worthy to take honourable place among the divines of past and present times, whose expositions of the Epistle to the Romans are among the most precious literary treasures of the Church. Without parade or pretence of learning, but with thorough scholarly equipment, the structure of the original text is scrutinized, and the value of its nicest grammatical accents and inflections appraised. The method of comparing Scripture with Scripture to evolve the hidden analogies and harmonies of sacred truth, is freely used, and with the happiest results. In balancing probabilities, and weighing the claims of conflicting opinions, there is displayed a judicial sobriety and moderation of mind as rare as it is valuable in religious teaching. Depth and quickness of spiritual insight, intuitive perception of the divine significance of common things, and warm sympathy with the Evangelical aspects of Bible truth, are everywhere evident. Finally, the

style of writing is clear, sententious, flexible, and rhythmical, with just a sufficient tincture of puritanic quaintness to give it flavour, and just sufficient imaginative colouring to give it brightness and beauty.

It must not be thought that because there is much learned annotation in these discourses they are therefore unfit for common people. The criticism itself though deep and subtle, is managed with such admirable simplicity, and is so entirely free from technical forms of expression, that persons of ordinary intelligence, though unversed in the original Greek, may read it with interest, and even judge correctly of its value. The criticism, however, bears only a small proportion to the body of the work. It is but as the fringe to the web, or as the frame to the picture. Every discovery is packed with the substance of Gospel truth. God's love to man, the work of redemption, justification by faith, spiritual life, victory over sin, oneness of believers with Christ, entire consecration to Christ,—these and kindred themes are discoursed of with fulness, simplicity, and beauty. While, therefore, the book is adapted to the study of the preacher, it is equally adapted to the ordinary purposes of Christian life.

C. C. M'K.



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DISCOURSE I.

FAITH AND ITS FRUITS.

ROMANS v. 1—5.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ : By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also : knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; And patience, experience ; and experience, hope : And hope maketh not ashamed ; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

THE term justified describes the relative state of believers as being free from the condemning sentence of the law. There is a work of grace wrought in believers producing moral goodness and adorning their conduct with things that are lovely and of good report. But this is quite separable in thought from justification, and not to be confounded with it, their co-existence and close connection notwithstanding. Though they cannot be disjoined in fact and in religious experience, they require to be kept distinct in the mind's conception. Roundly considered, justification is identical with pardon. It is nothing less than pardon, though systematic theology insists on it being something more. Because pardon is bestowed on us through a medium

rendering it warrantable and honourable, we are said to be justified, which is, strictly speaking, superior to forgiveness. It is the connection of our pardon with the atonement made by Christ that renders such a term suitable. We are pardoned, and God is justified in pardoning us. We are more than pardoned, being received to honours which perfect obedience could scarcely claim. We are justified. In several parts of the New Testament care is taken to show the ground upon which mercy is exercised. In other instances, with careless ease, forgiveness, remission, pardon, and justification are indifferently used as equivalents. Once the distinction has been explained, this is quite allowable. Ordinarily we may say we are pardoned or forgiven. If we wish to speak with theological exactness we must use the other term and say we are justified. The sins we committed up to a given point, though existing in fact, are ignored in law as non-existing, and as never having existed.

The instrumental means by which the blessing is realized in individual consciousness, is faith. We speak about the faith that justifies. Provided we understand our words rightly, the expression may pass. No act of our own justifies us. To justify us is the province of a person, no less a person than He whose law we have violated. "It is God that justifieth."¹ "Who can forgive sins but God only."² An act of our own minds being necessary at the time of

(1) *Rom. viii. 33.* (2) *Mark ii. 7.*

being pardoned, it is said that we are justified by faith.

What faith *is* is best apprehended by connecting it with its object. To explain its nature without such reference, is like an endeavour to define looking to, grasping, or leaning on, without specifying something to be seen, or held, or rested on. Faith is transitive. It passes over to an object. Looking is vague and aimless if there be nothing to which the eye is directed. Grasping is useless if there be nothing for the fingers to seize. Leaning is a wearisome action if there be no supporting arm to bear your weight. If faith does not go from itself it brings home no saving benefits. We speak here of its moral rather than of its intellectual element. Though it has to deal with evidence and with the credibility of testimony, its heart-action is its prevailing and most important ingredient. The *assent* of the mind is given by different persons according to their mental habits and capacity, numbers accepting truth upon very slight examination, and necessarily so, intellectual penetration and leisure being unequal. The *consent* of the heart, which is of deeper reach than the other, is of vital consequence. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Justifying faith, then, is the trust, reliance, or confidence of an awakened sinner in the vicarious sufferings of Christ. It is the hand we lay on the head of the suffering victim whilst we acknowledge our sins and seek forgiveness. Contact with the sacrifice dissolves our guilt and cancels our liabilities.

The appointment of faith as the means of justification takes the credit out of our hands and makes us debtors to grace. Had good works—charitable, social, or ceremonial—been required as pre-requisites, occasion would have been offered to self-trust, and a door opened for boasting. Faith leading us away from ourselves to place our whole dependence upon another, bars boasting to the door. “It is of faith, that it might be by grace.”¹ Such an arrangement cuts off self-exaltation, since it implies indebtedness and obligation. The benefit comes to us by gift. Our part is to open our hand and receive it, which certainly is not a subject of boast, unless we turn beggary and necessity into pride. We will surely not fall into the error of trusting in our trust or confiding in our confidence!

“We have peace with God.” Instead of this declaration, a reading is contended for which would make the clause hortatory or indicative of possibility or privilege. “Let us have peace,” or “we may have peace.” Though we do not venture to determine whether a short vowel or its corresponding long one is the correct text, we think the reading sought to be established quite out of joint with the facts of Christian experience. Can we be justified, and not have peace? If being justified we only “may have peace,” we are not much better than the unjustified, for they also *may* have it. We wish the scholars would leave this

(1) Rom. iv. 16.

clause as it is! It would be a strange thing to be justified and not have peace. Peace with God is the immediate result of pardon. It indicates our feeling towards Him, and His feeling towards us. We are no longer in hostility or alienation. Our enmity ceases. The adverse relationship on His part becomes extinct. He and we have reasoned together, and come to an understanding. We have embraced the terms offered "Or let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me."¹ As when two parties that were at odds are brought even by the kindly intervention of a third party, so it is with us. The Mediator has come between. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him."²

A fuller description of the benefits subsequent upon justification follows. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." The "also" points out something additional. Our first access when we obtained peace was through Christ. There was no need of an "also" to signify that, as it had been already said. Something more is meant. Our initiation into peaceful relationship with God, was the commencement of a fellowship destined to cover a lifetime on earth, and to eventuate in unbroken communion in heaven. The access is into grace. We understand it to mean the liberty of approach to a person—the

(1) Isa. xxvii. 5. (2) Isa. liii. 5.

Father. “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”¹ Some change the word, and read it, we have *introduction*. The allusion is borrowed from the custom of monarchs who kept their presence sacred, and free from vulgar approach. Without formal introduction none were allowed to invade the presence-chamber. Even favourites could not dispense with ceremony except at the hazard of life. Hence, Esther’s solicitude when she resolved to make a breach upon order, and plead for the lives of her people. By a desperate argument she prevailed upon herself. Certain to die if she did not intrude into the royal presence, she could but die in the venture. So she said, “If I perish, I perish.” Had the king sent his usher to introduce her, all would have been easy and safe. For a guilty world the Son of God was appointed to this office, which since His incarnation He has freely exercised, as also He did prior to His appearance in our flesh, though at that earlier time He was “straitened.” In the age of type and symbol, the way into the holiest was not made manifest. When the baptism of blood was accomplished, and the veil of His frail humanity was rent, an open pass-way was available for men. As if His body were rent asunder, we pass between the parts to God. He is “the door;”² He is “the way;”³ He is more—He is the living introducer who takes us by the hand, and conducts us to the King.

(1) Eph. ii. 18. (2) John x. 9. (3) John xiv. 6.

The grace wherein we stand may be held as identical with our justification, which is by grace through faith. The verb "stand" may be understood in its *forensic* sense. In legal proceedings a man stands or falls just as the proof of his innocence or guilt appears. If there is good evidence in his favour, or if the evidence against him lacks strength and consistency, we say he will stand. If it be otherwise, we pronounce him a doomed man. He cannot stand against so many swift witnesses and such strong proofs. Holy Scripture keeps up the same use of this word. "Thou, even Thou art to be feared: and who may *stand* in Thy sight when once Thou art angry?"¹ "For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to *stand*?"² "The ungodly shall not *stand* in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous."³ Neither could the godly stand, but for gracious provisions of which they have the benefit. "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall *stand*? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared."⁴

We submit another explanation. "Stand" means *continuance*. One who maintains character and consistency for a long course of years is said to stand. So "this grace wherein we stand" might mean wherein we remain, or abide. Very desirable it is that all who once come into the secret of grace should continue firm to the end. Whether all such will stand is a

(1) Ps. lxxvi. 7. (2) Rev. vi. 17. (3) Ps. i. 5. (4) Ps. cxxx. 3, 4.

point of keen debate between different schools of theology. Thus far we are clear; any one may persevere, many will, and every one should make it his endeavour. This sense of the word "stand" occurs, we think, in the following citations. "By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye *stand*."¹ "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye *stand*; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain."² "Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye *stand*."³ Between the two interpretations we make no choice, but include both. The Scripture is often manifold in its sense, and may, therefore, well combine two harmonious senses.

Joy and hope are added to peace and access. "And rejoice in hope of the glory of God." In the chain of antecedents and consequents immediately following, joy is not separately distinguished. It is drawn in by attraction with hope. The glory of God is the final bliss of which He is the author and bestower. He has called us to glory and virtue, and made us sharers with Christ, according to that petition in the sacerdotal prayer—"Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am;

(1) 1 Pet. v. 12. (2) 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2. (3) 2 Cor. i. 24.

that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me.”¹ Though joy is fed from other sources, it is largely indebted to the clear prospect of heaven. “Rejoicing in hope.”²

“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also.” The transitional phrase “and not only so,” looks back to the preceding clause. Not only do we rejoice in the prospect of future happiness, but we feel courageous under present sufferings. The translators have made this stronger than the original makes it. The word they render “glory” is the same as “rejoice,” in the clause above. The use of two different words in the English rendering obscures the meaning. It conveys the idea of a more triumphant state of mind concerning present trouble than in prospect of future happiness. We *rejoice* in hope of glory, but we *glory* in tribulations! Can this be? If there were a difference in our feelings about the two, would we not spend our liveliest emotions on the exhilarating prospect of heaven? It turns out, however, that the verb is the same in both clauses, and will bear uniform rendering. So a great authority³ has put it, in his Revised New Testament, choosing the stronger word for both clauses. “We glory in the hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we even glory in our tribulations.”

It has been proposed by one commentator to make the ellipsis include not only suffering actually experi-

(1) John xvii. 24. (2) Rom. xii. 12. (3) Alford.

enced, but the hope of remoter suffering. "Not only do we rejoice in hope of God's glory, but we rejoice *in the hope* of tribulations also." We are pleased to find that men of acknowledged erudition put a check on this ultraist, and decide that the rules of syntax are against so large an ellipsis. Less suffices to tax our virtue. We do well if we meet and surmount our troubles when they come, without feasting on them in delightful forethought. They are not so desirable that we should forecast and hail them with expectation. In themselves considered they are not joyous, but grievous. Their relation to the future, or their action upon our graces, enables us to bid them welcome. If we come under personal affliction, we take it as evidence of filial relationship. So Luther, in his illness, said, "Strike on, Lord, for now I know I am Thy child." If we smart under the rod of the wicked, we are but filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ. Happy they who suffer on such account! The early Christians were enduring even unto heroism. After scourging, and threat, and interdict, they departed from the bench of magistracy, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."¹ Paul gloried in suffering. St. James cheered his companions on to heroic endurance. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."² This is a fine pitch of Christian feeling. Happy they who can reach and maintain it!

(1) *Acts v. 41.* (2) *James i. 2.*

“Knowing that tribulation worketh patience”—worketh, that is, produces, effects, and exercises patience. It either brings it into existence where, before, there was none, or matures and strengthens it where previously existing. Whatever is the efficient and originating cause of patience, trouble is the proximate cause of its manifestation. “The God of patience” no doubt initiates this virtue in the breasts of saints by the breath of His Spirit, since we find among the fruits of the Spirit “long suffering,” which is but another name for patience. Yet, this grace is, in large measure, the result of providential discipline. It has to be worked, as the potter works the clay, or the smith the heated iron, to the shape that is in his mind. What sponging and pressing, and heating and hammering these artisans have before their work is complete! Even so is patience perfected. The clay is struck upon the wheel, and undergoes manipulation, and the iron comes under the hammer, and receives many a stroke before patience has her perfect work. This grace is of slow growth. Suffering in body, or mind, is its necessary forerunner. Tribulation is neighbour to patience, and its necessary companion. You may find the tribulation without the patience, but not the patience without the tribulation. A person, with health, and wealth, and friends, and bright prospects, can he have patience? With no pressure on his mind, and no pain in his body, he needs none, and cannot tell whether he has any. If

he is ambitious to have it, let him pray for trouble. Or, if he prays for patience, let him not be surprised if his prayer be answered by some heavy trouble coming on him to work the patience. This philosophical sequence is so well understood, that, in common parlance, we call sufferers *patients*.

“ And patience (worketh) experience”—proof, or evidence, growing out of practical application. Said Laban to Jacob, “ I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry; for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake.”¹ It takes time and patience to breed evidence in practical matters. The wise king in his old age says, “ My heart had great experience in wisdom and knowledge.”² After being long exercised with trying circumstances and bearing them well, the tokens of sound character appear in you to your own comfort and to the satisfaction of others. The proof is according to the duration and intensity of your suffering. Experience belongs to veterans who have seen war and conducted themselves with valour in perilous conflict. Young recruits who have only done drill and performed soldierly movements on parade, have no proofs to exhibit. They must wait till occasion falls out, till fields of honour are open to them, and they return from hard-fought battles with scars about them to be shown as tokens of their prowess in fight. Patience worketh experience.

(1) Gen. xxx. 27. (2) Eccles. i. 16.

“And experience (worketh) hope,”—puts new vigour into it and a fresh bloom upon it, enlivens and confirms it. There is a hope prior to experience and necessary to produce it. In this genealogy hope is not represented as born of experience, though it is strengthened and enlarged by it. In an important sense it produces experience, as it prompts to action and so wins material for proof. Then it lives, and leans upon, what it has won. The young soldier who has never fleshed his sword nor held up a battered shield to the enemy cannot boast experience. Yet he has hope even when he puts on his harness for the first time. After he has acquired dexterity in handling his weapons, and has gained a few battles, his hope is assisted in that proportion. One victory encourages him to look for another. Two successes feed expectation of a third. Occasional defeat may be useful to check presumption and promote caution. So the flush and wildness of hope may be subdued and tempered. Failure can be turned to good account, though hope prefers success. Captain Joshua laid experience under tribute to hope in the Canaanitish wars. He knew how to improve a victory and make it put new life into the hearts of his soldiers. “And it came to pass when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon

the necks of them. And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage; for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.”¹ In like manner David fortified himself when he confronted the Philistine giant, by calling to mind deeds of daring he had performed. To the doubts of king Saul, who dwelt upon the heavy odds against him in strength, and stature, and sword exercise, he replied, “Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and smote him and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.”² An experience like David’s, so rich in incidents and extreme perils, enabled him to say to his soul, “Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.”³

“And hope maketh not ashamed”—does not disgrace or dishonour us in difficulties. Disappointment begets shame. Defeated hopes put a man to the blush and make him abashed in the presence of those who witness his failure. Whether subject to sympathy or mockery, he feels humbled, and requires time for his wounds to heal. If none were cognizant of his back-cast, the same feeling, though less intense, would

(1) Josh. x. 24, 25. (2) 1 Sam. xvii. 34—36. (3) Ps. xlii. 5.

disturb his breast. The noble hope of a Christian never mocks him, but enables him to hold his head up under vicissitude. Earthly good is not the matter of his hope. As far as the rubs and reverses of life are concerned, his hope is, not to avoid them, but to have grace to bear them well. His hope is laid up in heaven. It steadies him. The vessel may be tossed upon the swelling wave, but the anchor saves it from drifting by the hold it has within the veil. The Christian's foes have often said to him when wrongfully oppressing him, "Where is now thy God?" The taunt has no edge, as he knows what to expect from the world.

There are fallacious and delusive hopes. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?"¹ It is as slender as a "spider's web." The hope of secular good is often a mockery. Hopes that rest on the promises of men, even princely and noble men, are liable to disappointment. Self-conceived hopes in which men build themselves up without sound reason, are blown away like dust. Men are so much inclined to hope, that they will cling to a straw. Let every man of us look well to his hope of heaven, to see that it is of genuine birth, and is tested and worked by experience. Then we shall never need to blush, as it will not desert us; no, not when we dip our feet into the cold waters of Jordan. "The righteous hath hope in his death."²

(1) Job xxvii. 8. (2) Prov. xiv. 82.

A reason is rendered next why hope does not betray us. "Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Christian experience is more than a naked hope. It is an inward life that quickens the noblest emotions of the soul. But for this, hope would be feeble and limping. Its life depends upon the love that "hopeth all things." And that love is one of the best fruits of the Spirit. The different graces of Christian character act upon each other, and are all helped by the Spirit. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."¹

"The love of God" is liable to be understood of man's love of God, or of God's love to man. The commentators are divided, a great number holding that God's love is meant and not man's at all. They seem jealous of admitting the other possible import of it, we suspect from doctrinal bias. Others throw it wholly upon man as the loving subject, and make God the object of the love. We think Wesley's brief explanation combining both, is good and trustworthy. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts—"The Divine conviction of God's love to us, and that love to God, which is the earnest and beginning of heaven."

The shedding-abroad of this love signifies plenitude. The word means to pour out, to lavish, to squander, to stream out, to spread forth. It is spoken of water

(1) Rom. xv. 13.

teeming freely from a fountain. It is the term used about the ancient ceremony of anointing priests and kings at their inauguration into office. The holy oil was poured on their heads, and shed forth with freedom over their persons. The precious ointment dropped on Aaron's head, flowed down upon his beard, which extended towards his lower garments. Royal heads were baptized with the same costly liquid before they were surmounted with the golden crown. The children of grace, who are kings and priests unto God, have an unction bestowed on them which gladdens their own hearts and diffuses a good savour within the area of their influence. It is not a precious oil ceremoniously wasted upon their heads and bedewing their robes, but the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. This it is their privilege to enjoy in fulness. It is shed on them abundantly. This is the evidence of adoption and appointment to the holy ministry of devotion. This warrants our approach to God's altar, and moves us towards it. No wonder that this gives vigour to hope. Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. Having this we never lack portable and ready testimony to our high vocation, and our personal acceptance. We are not left to infer, and deduce, and argue, and reach the desired conclusion by combining numerous items of evidence. The light beams on us and into us without such painful seeking and courting. Love is shed abroad *in* our hearts, as if the blessed Agent dwelt

within and did His work not from above, but internally. All this is by pure gift. The Holy Ghost is "given unto us." Up to this point of the epistle, the Spirit's work in believers is not once named. After this, the third person in the Trinity is kept prominently in view.

Believers, behold your privilege; and enjoy it. The early Christians were filled with the Spirit. So you may be. The residue of the Spirit is equal to its original fulness. Pentecost continues till now. Let us live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. So shall we have the most satisfactory proof of our christian state. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit."

DISCOURSE II.

CHRIST OUR SUBSTITUTE.

ROMANS V. 6-8.

" For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

THE condition mankind were in, viewed apart from Christ, was deplorably sad—"we were yet without strength." The term so rendered either means that we were *weak* or that we were *wicked*. Commentators incline to preserve the old theological notion of moral weakness being equivalent to wickedness. They wish to attach such import to this "without strength," that it may be a fair exchange for "the ungodly" in the next line. We hold that those who are without strength are the very same persons afterwards denominated "ungodly," "sinners," and "enemies." This does not prevent our claiming a distinctive import for the earlier term, which, in our judgment, is not to be merged in, or confounded with the others, as of identical meaning. The proper sense of the word is

weak, since it is compounded of a word that means strength, and a privative prefix, which, in composition, has a negative or depriving power.

Fallen men were without resources—destitute, helpless, and exposed to misery. They were in a condition of alienation and exposure to Divine displeasure through sin, and had no self-resources to struggle out of it. Their peculiar circumstances, as derived and descended from one another, and from one common head, who became evil before generation commenced, are such as greatly to qualify the regards of other moral beings towards them. Sinners of mankind are objects of moral disapprobation. Other orders of being will regard them so, and justly, for sin is sinful, culpable, hateful, and loathsome, under whatever circumstances. But men are so constituted and situated as to receive an amount of discount from intelligent observers of their errors. Weaklings generally engage sympathy, be they moral weaklings or weak in body or mind, or as lying under social disabilities. The low and wretched and indigent are readily recognized as pitiable. The eye of benevolence melts when it looks on them. If no questions are asked as to how they came to be in such condition, the sympathy has full scope. That they are impoverished, afflicted, or sorrowful suffices. If, upon inquiry or volunteered information, it is found that their wretchedness is the consequence of wrong-doing on their own part, another element of feeling comes into

play antagonistic withal to sympathy. Some severe minds would forego their sympathy entirely in moral detestation, or would sympathize with them only so far as their suffering was supposed to be in excess of their sin. Kindlier natures would soften towards them whilst they still disapproved of their behaviour. Let it be ascertained that some one person, closely related to them, by a slip in his behaviour, reduced them to their low condition, although their personal conduct has aggravated the case, this would furnish a mitigating consideration.

Since the first man disobeyed his Maker sin has had free scope amongst men, and has produced bitter fruits. His immediate descendants copied his example. They did so in consequence of a deteriorated nature, which they derived from him. Then their offspring fell heirs to the same Antinomian dispositions, and pursued the same course of rebellion. So, through successive generations, the evil has come on to our times. The inborn depravity is by no means impaired by repeating itself over such an extent of time and being reproduced in multiplied births. Neither do we think it is deepened or aggravated. It was sufficiently bad to begin with, without growing worse. It has had power to enslave every generation and every individual. Proportionate to the strength of evil desire is men's weakness. We were out of joint with the law through our inward estrangement, so that we were weak to keep it, or it was weak to keep us under rule.

Between it and us there was a weakness that disabled us somehow. There was something which the law could not do, in that it was weak through our flesh. The weakness is predicated of the law, but our disordered nature was the real seat of the incapacity. We were weak to spring obedience to its precepts, and equally so to ward off its penalty. In this condition the first sin of the first man involved us. Born to evil as men were, none of them could turn the captivity of his brethren. Once sin got in, it spread commensurate with the increase of the race. Men could neither expiate their offences by propitiating measures, nor put themselves into condition to live well. As, therefore, none but the first man was ever in a condition not to have sinned at all, but did sin, and as it pleased our Maker to multiply human beings and people the world, remedial provision seems to have been a necessity. There being no health or help in the creature, Divine love came to the rescue.

"IN DUE TIME CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY."

The ungodly—the impious, unholy, profane—which is the character of all men. Considered in the light of the context, there is emphasis due to this word. The force of the passage hinges upon the character of the persons for whom Christ interposed. The love is heightened by the depth of moral degradation into which its object had sunk. The argument is stated in this verse and carried forward to the next for expansion and enlargement. The deed of love was performed,

not for amiable characters recommended by full-blown virtues, but for such as were repulsive and odious—ungodly. The world-wide aspect of the atonement is involved in this clause. Who are these “ungodly” for whom Christ died? One says they are the Gentiles. If we accept this it looks far towards our point, as the Pagans were the greatest part of the ancient world. Yet the other smaller division, the Jews, with a better theology, bore the stamp of ungodliness just as deeply. Another commentator, of great critical reputation, restricts the reference to those who become subjects of grace. He brackets the word *us*, and reads, “Christ died for [*us*] who are ungodly.” Had the apostle meant no more than this, it would have been the easiest thing imaginable to have completed the verse by the personal pronoun, just as he closes the eighth verse, “Christ died for us.” This he avoids, we think, intentionally, for the twofold purpose of bringing into view the character of those for whom Christ died, and indicating that His death had respect to all sustaining that character. An atonement made for all men is so largely and expressly taught in the general tenor of Scripture as to require no aid, and to gather no appreciable strength, from this small criticism. But we think it right to win even an inch of ground from those who restrict Christ’s death to the actual partakers of the benefit.

“Christ died for the ungodly.” In what sense He died for them is worthy of being ascertained. There

are two senses contended for, namely: for *their benefit*, and *in their stead*. These two views come very near each other. They approach so closely that it may seem trifling to contend for their distinctness. Yet there is a point of divergence, and at that point lies all the difference. One person may die for another's benefit in several ways quite distinct from that of dying in his room or stead. Martyrs have died for us to bequeath to us a system of truth which they held to be divine, and to give us an example of holy constancy. Patriots have sacrificed their lives to hand forward to us our civil liberties and privileges. And how many lives have thus been devoted in the defence of our country against invasion! All these died for our benefit. In venturing life for another and dying in the attempt a man dies for that other whose life he aims at saving, whether he succeeds to rescue him or not. But these cases do not stand parallel with Christ dying for an ungodly world. He was more than a martyr, more than a patriot, and more than a bold venturer in a case of danger. The persons He died for were under a doom and a sentence, and He sought their release by being answerable for them to suffer what infinite justice would accept. His death was no venture or hazard. It was intended, appointed, predicted, and for ages shadowed forth in bloody offerings. It had judicial relations. It had expiatory and vicarious virtue. His suffering was accepted in the eye of the law to free us from liability. Does not this make

Him properly our substitute ? We repudiate the low and gross ideas that the enemies of Christian doctrine charge us with. We do not hold that Christ's death on the cross was to save us from dying on a cross, or to save us from temporal death at all. Neither do we hold that He suffered the identical penalty due to us both in kind and amount. He suffered instead of us suffering. He suffered that which *was* of avail to nullify our penalty, so that, upon the exercise of penitence and faith, we are accepted for His sake as if we had never transgressed. This is what we mean by His being our substitute. The express declarations of Scripture warrant us, as we think. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."¹ "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."² "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."³ All this is quite as strong as saying that Christ is our substitute.

"*In due time* Christ died." The marginal reading is, "according to the time." It helps us to the true explanation, if we exchange the word time, and trans-

(1) Isa. liii. 5, 6. (2) 2 Cor. v. 21. (3) 1 Pet. iii. 18.

late "according to the *season*." Might not Christ have come and lived and died at a much earlier date, say, close after the fall, or before the flood, or soon after the flood? Why should Abraham, and Moses, and Joshua precede Him? Why a succession of judges and a line of kings forerun Him? Why so many centuries of time make a tedious lapse, the world being kept in comparative ignorance meantime about the way of salvation? Was there no waste of time? Or we may ask, if He could not have come sooner, might He not have been later? Might it not have been our privilege to be His contemporaries? Or might not His appearance in the flesh have been postponed till nearer the consummation of time itself? Then the tragedy of Calvary and the final judgment might have come almost together. We mean no irreverence in asking these questions. If it had been a matter of indifference when the Saviour should come, the right of determination was still with Him who has the times in His power. The Ruler of the ages could have put the incarnation backward or forward at His mere pleasure. But, we presume, it was not done arbitrarily. There was a propriety in Christ coming just when He came, rather than sooner or later. The time was suitable, and was *the* time. It was the *predicted* time, though that was a secondary matter. If it could have been at any time else, prophecy would have pointed accordingly. In the divine administration prophecy depends upon events, and not events upon it. Although

it pleases us much to know that Jesus died at the predicted period, we do not conclude that He died then because it was so foretold, but rather that because He died then it was foretold so. The truth is, His death-time was a *season*. There was a process leading to it. Ceremony, prediction, miracle, and providence were all working towards the result. The scheme was delineated in God's book, where its parts were gradually fashioned when as yet none of them had ripened into reality and obviousness. Expectation had been awokened and sustained over a course of centuries, and it was not disappointed. The issue arrived, and the goodly scheme had a perfect birth. Seasons are proverbially faithful : the seed-time comes first, and much underground work is done, and expectation is sustained upon green appearances ; but the "corn cometh in his season." "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law."¹ It was a time of deep-felt need. Human sin had grown to a great head, and could not be cured by any device of man. Long trial had been made by philosophers, and statesmen, and moral reformers, to cure the existing evil. They proved to be physicians of no value. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. It was time for the water to be troubled, and the angel came at the "certain season," none behind the time and none before. The passover was kept "at His appointed season," in the evening of this world's day ; "but now

(1) Gal. iv. 4.

once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”¹

“ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.” This pursues the idea expressed in the sixth verse, of one person dying instead of another. It indicates the necessity of noble character in the person for whom another would die. Whereas the previous verse had said that Christ died for *the ungodly*, this affirms that uncommon excellence is required in another to induce any one to die for him. To apprehend the meaning in this verse, we must distinguish accurately the import of the terms “righteous” and “good.” In common parlance, we take liberties with these terms, and use them as if they were equivalent and exchangeable. A man that fears God and deals upon right principles with men, we call a righteous man, or a good man. Whether we use the one term or the other, we mean the same. This free use of the terms may be found in the Scripture, as for example—“A *good man* sheweth favour and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he shall not be moved for ever; the *righteous* shall be in everlasting remembrance.”² For ordinary purposes this will do. But in argument and logical process this license cannot be permitted. In the passage in hand it could not be allowed, for the obvious reason that a contrast is

(1) Heb. ix. 26. (2) Ps. cxii. 5, 6.

intended between the good man and the righteous man. It would be impossible to contrast a man with himself, or a character with the same character, as there would be no difference. Therefore we hold the righteous man and the good man to be distinct persons. We will devote a paragraph or two to the description of each.

A righteous man is characterized by the strictest integrity,—is honest, truthful, and exact. In all commercial transactions he is ruled by a sense of justice, which prompts him to render to others their full due to a fraction. The smallest filament that belongs to another he would deem it a sin to retain. “From a thread even to a shoe-latchet,” he will have nothing that is another man’s. The charge we have against him is, that he is severe in demanding all his own dues. He makes a hedge of thorn about his entire property, and reserves it all to his own good and exclusive use. The fourfold classification of character to which the commentators refer for the illustration of this passage, marks him off very distinctly. There is a kind of man that says, “What is mine is mine, and what is thine is thine;” a kind that says, “What is mine is thine, and what is thine is mine;” a kind that says, “What is mine is mine, and what is thine is mine;” and another kind that says, “What is mine is thine, and what is thine is thy own.” The righteous man stands first in this division. He insists upon a clear line being drawn between his and

his neighbour's land, and forbids any encroachments being made. Whatever grows upon his grounds is all his own, both sheaf and gleaning. He is quite as careful to keep all to himself that belongs to him, as he is to give to others what is in justice due. Though he keeps a good understanding with all who deal with him in trade, he wins no golden opinions on the ground of generosity or costly kindnesses.

In estimating this character it is worth enquiring whether he is rich or poor. If he be poor, that circumstance may qualify our feelings towards him. Some can be righteous without any strain or effort. With ample means at command they can discharge all monetary obligations with ease. Some of more limited means can only keep abreast of the world by dint of self-denial. Find a man in humble life whose entire energy is rather in the rear of requirement, and who makes a struggle, and by care and retrenchment keeps his outlay down to his income, and has the satisfaction of holding up his head among his peers as an honest man, that leans on no one but himself, and you have a righteous man whom you can respect and admire. The righteous man of our text must be otherwise regarded. He has it in the power of his hand to indulge in liberality, if his heart would let him. He is churlishly righteous from an inborn baseness of soul.

In strong contrast we have a good man. His characteristic is bountifulness of disposition. Without

neglecting the claims of justice, he is feelingly alive to the promptings of generosity. He, too, is as just as his hard neighbour in rendering to his compeers their rights and claims, but not so severely just in challenging his own. Instances occur in which he thinks it proper to forego a claim, his debtor being under the crush of untoward circumstances. Whilst he does justly he loves mercy. In a world like this, with so much affliction and poverty, disappointment and casualty, a good man is in large request. The principle of self-support is good. We honour the noble-minded independence that struggles to do without help. But this is a rough world: things are often so jostled out of position as to create fair occasion for the play of bountiful dispositions. Some come under the necessity of receiving help, and others have the blessed opportunity of giving the help required; and neither is the receiver degraded nor the giver injured. A good man is ready to render help in every available way: he has a roof-tree for the houseless, a wardrobe for the naked, a store-room for the hungry, a heart of sympathy for the afflicted, and a tongue to plead for the injured. But he is respected and loved most for the kindly nature that prompts these outward deeds. It is not so much the money value that he parts with, as the considerate kindness which moves him to such doings, that stamps him good. There is a blandness and cordiality about him, sweetening all his actions; so that if his substantial charities were considerably less,

he would still be esteemed a good man. Who so base as not to rejoice in the welfare of such a man ? Who so heartless as not to share his grief ?

Our apostle speaks about some one dying for these men ; and he puts his words most carefully together, as if he had studied and weighed them well. It is seldom, indeed, that such a prodigy of love occurs, as one person deliberately dying for another. The opportunity for such a display is infrequent ; not being offered more than once or twice in an age, and when offered not very eagerly embraced. Such a deed is told to excite wonder. A historian deems it a privilege to have a well-authenticated instance with which to adorn his page ; and posterity reads it with a close questioning of the evidence. The person for whom another would die must have some rare virtues to engage and move the substitute to such self-sacrifice. He must have laid the public in general, or the individual who offers to take his place, in particular, under great obligation before such a favour could be shown to him. There is small probability indeed of the severely righteous man obtaining a substitute if he had to die a public death. Never having played the benefactor, there could be no impulse of gratitude to stir any one to stand in for him. And his stern virtues being chiefly displayed in his own interests, were not such as to gender a dying love. He might die unwept, unless he died unjustly. The good man, beneficent, kind, and generous, whose widespread bounty had

enlisted the love of hundreds, would be in better case. He would die more deeply lamented. Perhaps some one, touched with admiration of his character, or some other heavily indebted to him in gratitude, would step forward and take his place, and redeem a life so noble and useful. But perhaps not. The translation says, "*peradventure*." It says, "*some* would"—not just any or every person would be ready and forward. It says, "*some* would even *dare* to die," which is well put, for it is a bold thing to volunteer dying. If we could imagine help coming to both characters we would expect the good man's substitute to come more cheerfully than the other. The one would move as with a leaden weight attached to him; the other with feet like wings. This passage translated according to the general use of terms in Greek would find a substitute for both these men, and show the contrast in the way we have indicated. The adverb *tacha*, rendered "*peradventure*," always means *quickly, soon*, except when accompanied by a certain particle which is not in our present text. And the other words that come from the same root signify swiftness, fleetness, or speed. We submit this by permission, since authorities have decided that *in the New Testament* the word means *perhaps, possibly*. The story of Damon and Pythias, well known to readers of ancient history, is a lively illustration of the text. We forbear its insertion, as it is familiar, and hasten on to complete our exposition.

Verse 8, "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "*Commendeth His love*"—establishes, exhibits, recommends, displays, renders conspicuous, His love. Any one of these terms is applicable. Or we may banish them all, and keep the given word "*commendeth*" before us. It is a sort of conciliating term, hinting some shyness or estrangement as previously existing, or some feeling of distance. By the good offices of His Son as Mediator He did away the distance, and gave such demonstration of His love as is fitted to overcome our sullenness and win our hearts. In social intercourse one person commends another as worthy of admission within the circle of our fellowship. So Paul introduces a Christian female to the Church at Rome, using this same word, "*I commend unto you Phœbe our sister.*" God commended Himself to the world. He gave such a brilliant proof of His love, as to latest time will attract attention, and encourage successive generations to trust and serve Him. "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."¹

This instance of love is put in contrast with the noblest manifestations of human love, which it far overtops. His ways of love are above. His is not the manner of men. "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."²

(1) Eph. ii. 7. (2) John xv. 18.

Persons knit to each other by strong endearments will sometimes defend one another to death, or exchange situations when one must live and the other die. When Jesus would go into Judea where His life was imperilled, Thomas, under a touch of noble daring, rallied his fellow disciples and said, "Let us also go that we may die with Him."¹ Peter said, "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake."² David wished to have died, not for Saul his enemy, but for Absalom his son. "Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"³ In all cases in which men have cherished a dying love there will be found strong disposing circumstances such as did not exist in Christ dying for us. Men have died, and talked of dying for friends. Christ died for enemies. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Guilty, fallen, degraded, and open to the stroke of justice, man became an object of mercy. Upon another order of beings, whose fall was partial, the penalty of sin fell with terrible weight, and made them monuments of justice. But lo, a mystery of love attaches to the history of fallen men! It is difficult to say why. Noble qualities could not be pleaded. We were neither righteous nor good. High capacities could scarcely be adduced as the reason. The unredeemed angels were probably of nobler constitution, and are left without means of recovery. It could be no need

(1) John xi. 16. (2) John xiii. 87. (3) 2 Sam. xviii. 38.

of us that dictated our redemption. The thought would be unworthy of the self-sufficiency of the great Being. He might have blotted us out, and by His power created another order worthier of His favour. We cannot bottom this ocean. It is best just to say, "For His great love wherewith He loved us."

This subject furnishes—

1. *A firm ground of confidence.* Is it so, that such costly love has been lavished on us considered as deserving objects of Divine displeasure? What ground, then, can there be for doubt, or fear, or foreboding concerning the bestowment of everything necessary to complete our salvation and final felicity? "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"¹ Can we doubt His willingness to pardon, cleanse, and keep us, when He has already done what is greater, and done it with a view to those other things? If we can but believe that God gave His Son to die for us, we cannot have difficulty in crediting the realization of lighter favours. Here is—

2. *An example for imitation.* Since we have been loved at such a dear rate, are we not under deep obligation to love one another? United by a common interest in Christ, we are bound to love our Christian brethren in a very high degree. If Jesus be our model, we see at a glance what should be the measure of our love. We may never in point of fact be called

(1) Rom. viii. 32.

upon to discharge the obligation we lie under. But the obligation is expressly affirmed. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."¹ Our love should reach to our enemies too, for He loved us being enemies. The love of relatives is natural. The love of friends who love us is but repayment. "If ye love them that love you, what do ye more than others?" To love an enemy is the very triumph of love. Here we have—

3. *An argument for devotedness to Christ.* In life and death we ought to be His. As it is highly improbable that we shall ever be called upon to die for Him, we should be all the more ambitious to live to Him, and practically acknowledge His lordship over us. "For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's." Our utmost devotion and industry will still leave us His everlasting debtors.

(1) 1 John iii. 16.

DISCOURSE III.

GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE.

ROMANS V. 9, 10.

"Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

BELIEVERS are warranted to hope for great things, on account of the marvellous display of grace already made in their favour. When we see a broad and strong foundation laid, we naturally infer a superstructure to be reared of answerable proportions. A narrow basis would not suffice for a lofty and magnificent fabric. A deep and massive foundation, surmounted by an edifice of a single story, and of meagre proportions, would reflect discredit upon the architect. When the foundations are laid and the preparations seen, we may guess what sort of a building will follow. Carrying out this idea, what must be the result of God's gracious purpose in Christ Jesus? He has begun magnificently in showing His kindness to a guilty world. It is no mean gift by

which He has given expression to His love. After such a beginning, scanting would be out of all reason. The unspeakable gift of His Son to die for men must be followed up by corresponding munificence. He has committed Himself so far, that He must do great things for all who meet the published conditions of His grace. Having conferred on His believing people a pardon whose validity cannot be questioned, salvation, in the large sense of that word, is the proper consequence to follow. "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

"Much more" points to vantage ground in reasoning. It denotes a position gained, which warrants the writer to affirm boldly what follows. It is what logicians call an argument "with stronger reason." With Paul it is a favourite expression. It turns up several times in this chapter, and is freely used in his other epistles. Take one example. "For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, *much more* doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. . . . For if that which was done away was glorious, *much more* that which remaineth is glorious."¹ Other specimens of this kind of argument occur in sacred Scripture. "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of

(1) 2 Cor. iii. 9, 11.

the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not *much more* clothe you, O ye of little faith ? ”¹ “ If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: *how much more* shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him ? ”² “ For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: *how much more* shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ? ”³

“ Being justified ” is the point on which the “ *much more* ” hinges. This state of justification is named in the first verse. The writer evidently intends some connection between that point and this. He brings forward and repeats his thread of argument, but with an observable difference. In the first instance, he says, “ being justified by faith; ” in the second, “ being justified by His blood.” So there is preserved a clear distinction between our part in justification, the act and deed by which it is secured, and Christ’s part, on account of which the blessing is bestowed. We call His blood the *meritorious ground* of our justification. The expression is liable to be excepted to by fastidious critics, but it is sound theological language, and conveys well the idea that there is a vital connection between Christ’s passion and our acceptance. His

(1) Matt. vi. 30. (2) Luke xi. 18. (3) Heb. ix. 13, 14.

blood procures, deserves, or warrants our pardon. We are pardoned on its account and for its sake. No other ground is sufficient. Our coming into gracious relationship with our offended Maker depends entirely on the precious blood of Jesus.

To take into view the manifold relations of our justification, requires patient attention. The Father's grace is distinctly affirmed as the first moving cause. As mediation was a necessary element, it was the more needful to assert the Father's love as the originating source, and so clear His character from any dark suspicion which guilty minds might cherish. Accordingly, we are "justified freely by *His grace* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."¹ "That being justified by *His grace*, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."² There was, too, an evidential cause furnished in the resurrection of Jesus. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."³ On our part faith is instrumental to it. Our humble penitence bears to it a relation of congruity, though it can make no claim. Of the two men who "went into the temple to pray," the self-exalting one miscarried in his devotions. The penitent mercy-seeker "went down to his house justified rather than the other."⁴ Those who are willing to justify themselves build an edifice without foundation. "If I justify myself, mine own

(1) Rom. iii. 24. (2) Tit. iii. 7. (3) Rom. iv. 25.

(4) Luke xviii. 14.

mouth shall condemn me.”¹ Self-vindication shuts against us the door of grace. Yet is no man pardoned for his penitence, nor even for his faith. We flee for refuge to an altar whose horns are sprinkled with blood. If instead of repairing to it we resort to another more agreeable to our fancy, however much we adorn it with fruits and flowers, or enrich it with silver and gold, we fail to realize peace. We can take safe sanctuary nowhere but under the shadow of the divinely-appointed altar. Blood only can protect us, the blood that maketh atonement. “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”²

“We shall be saved from wrath through Him”—in the exact order of the words, “we shall be saved by Him from the wrath.” There are two distinct blessings named in this verse, the difference between them being doubly testified. First, they are expressed by different words, namely, “justified” and “saved.” Secondly, they differ in their time. We *are* already justified. We *shall be* saved. Our justification is past, our salvation is future. As this point turns up in the next verse, we pass it for the present. We shall be saved *by Him*. Who else can save us? It is His work, in which He is apt and mighty. His name is Jesus, given by the angel who instructed His virgin mother that He should be so named, and who gave like direction to Joseph with the reason added, “for

(1) Job ix. 20. (2) Heb. ix. 22.

He shall save His people from their sins." To save is His peculiar and exclusive right. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."¹

"We shall be saved by Him *from the wrath*." The article omitted in translation gives the clause more force, and leads the reader to enquire after some description of the wrath so defined. From the wrath? From what wrath? The wrath deserved and due. The wrath denounced and warned of. "Because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with His stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee."² *The wrath* is no doubt the wrath of God, the wrath to come, the wrath reserved and slumbering now while mercy is wakeful and active. Holy Scripture is not delicate and recoiling as we are in speaking of wrath. It speaks of it freely in strong and severe terms. There is a "fire" of wrath that burns with consuming fury; a "cup of wrath" mixed of bitter ingredients; "vials of wrath" full of plagues; a "wine-press of wrath;" and a "day of wrath." But it is all righteous. It falls only upon those who deserve it, and treasure it up to themselves. Were we holier in character and more in sympathy with rectitude, we should be on the Lord's side, and approve the decisions of His justice. We wince at the very thought of it. The wrath of men, especially of princely men, is to be avoided. Divine

(1) *Acts* iv. 12. (2) *Job* xxxvi. 18.

wrath is much more to be deprecated. The Psalmist speaks of it as past estimate. "Who knoweth the power of Thine anger ? even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath."¹ Of this awful theme—enough ! We have heard of it by the hearing of the ear. We need never know it further than by report.

Observe the force of the argument. "Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." To this end we were justified. Not to be saved from wrath would neutralize that gracious act. The king exercises the royal prerogative for the purpose of saving the culprit's life. The royal pardon is properly drawn by the king's secretary, signed, sealed, and delivered. The officers of justice understand that their services will be dispensed with on the day appointed for the execution. The sealed document forbids them to touch the prisoner except to take off his fetters and lead him out of prison. This is our case. When we were obnoxious and offensive we were justified ; "much more being justified, we shall be saved from wrath."

The tenth verse repeats and amplifies the same argument. There are verbal differences, but the logical construction and conclusion are the same. The terms of the one verse may be accepted for those of the other. "Reconciled" equals "justified." "The death of His Son" corresponds with "by His blood." "Saved by His life" is identical with "saved through

(1) Psalm xc. 11.

Him." "Enemies" has its tacit parallel in our unjustified state. As there so here, the "much more" comes in to combine the antithetical terms, and show the force of the reasoning.

"When we were enemies" is open to two explanations. *We were enemies to Him.* Feeble enemies we are! What can we do against one so strong and secure in Himself? The worse for us if we are His enemies! Whether this is, or is not the meaning, it is true that we are in antagonism with Him. Both our outward conduct and our inward feelings bear testimony. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled."¹ "Haters of God."² The other explanation, that *He was our enemy*, though much excepted to, is in our judgment the true one. Men become objects of hatred to God by sin, which obliges Him to look upon, and treat them, as enemies. They are so "hateful" to Him, that His heart cannot be towards them. He "abhorred" and "hated" even His chosen nation when they corrupted His worship. If we dismiss from our minds the severe aspects of the Divine character, and occupy our thoughts only with its mild and merciful phases, we practise a deception upon ourselves, and mould God to our own fancy. He is an enemy to sinners, though such an enemy as is propitious and reconcilable.

Reconciliation requires to be thoughtfully consid-

(1) Col. i. 21. (2) Rom. i. 30.

ered. It is a moot point whether men are reconciled to God or God is reconciled to men. Both statements are, no doubt, true. But they are not true in the same sense. To be profitable and reach a right issue, reconciliation must be mutual and cordial. But it is not the same thing to both parties subjectively considered. The medium of the adjustment may be the same to both, whilst their feelings in relation to it differ. God was reconciled to us by the death of His Son. We were reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. So far we are equal. Jesus was the common "daysman" or "mediator." His death has relation to us both. It did not require two persons to adjust the offence, one to reconcile God to us, and another to reconcile us to Him. The "One Mediator" did for both. The difference lies in the subjective states of the two parties, and in their different relations. One of them is the offended to whom some indignity has been offered, or some wrong done, which needs repair or amends. The other stands chargeable with the insult or injury. Now to which of the two must reparation be made? They both require reconciling, but the reconciling amends are due to Him who was dishonoured and sinned against.

In the primary and proper sense of the word, the Infinite Majesty is reconciled to men. Hence, we frequently read of reconciliation or atonement, which is its synonymous equivalent, being *made*. In such case it is not made to the offending party, but to the

offended, either by the offender or by some one else for him. It is made to the offended, and for the offender. We quote passages from both Testaments for proof and illustration. The first is about the consecration of the altar, and shows for what purpose an altar existed. "And Moses took the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about with his finger, and purified the altar, and poured the blood at the bottom of the altar, and sanctified it, *to make reconciliation upon it.*"¹ "And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation ; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people : and he put on incense, and *made an atonement for the people.*"² The ancient rubric is full to this purpose. The prophetic rolls which pointed to Messiah indicated that He should be a priest and a sacrifice, "*to make reconciliation for iniquity.*"³ The New Testament is in perfect accord with this. "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, *to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*"⁴

Even those passages which represent offenders as being reconciled to those whom they have offended, mean that reparation is made and accepted. It was said of David, when he became obnoxious to Saul— "Wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his

(1) Lev. viii. 15. (2) Numb. xvi. 47. (3) Dan. ix. 24.
(4) Heb. ii. 17.

master? should it not be with the heads of these men?"¹ The men's heads were not supposed to incline David favourably towards Saul, but they might win Saul's favour and turn away his displeasure. So Christ's suffering was the medium of Divine favour to guilty men. "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."² Though we are said to be reconciled to God, it is obvious that He was first made reconcilable by the death of His Son, whom He sent to be "the propitiation for our sins." True as it is that upon our being pardoned there is a change in our feelings towards God we cannot accept this as the thing intended, but rather the change of relationship in Him towards us as no longer displeased with us. As it is parallel with being justified, it can have no respect to our personal feelings, but only to our relative standing.

"*We shall be saved*"—which is more than being justified, as the successful conclusion is more than the hopeful commencement. Salvation is of great reach and compass, inclusive of numerous helps and deliverances. After we are justified we have temptations. We need power to resist them. If we are victorious we are saved. It is our privilege to conquer. If in

(1) 1 Sam. xxix. 4. (2) 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

some instances we yield and fall into sin (it cannot be often), we require pardon and grace to renew and assure us. It is better not to need re-assurance. If we do, there is access to the fountain. Our first pardon, though a great one, did not exhaust the store of mercy. There is a residue to meet an occasional lapse, of which the fewer we have the better. Besides, there come upon us afflictions, persecutions, and disappointments, in all which we need help. Last of all, we have to confront the king of terrors, and pass into the unknown eternity. We have to be saved to the last and *at* the last. "But he that endureth to the end shall be saved."¹ The vessel that leaves port in hopeful style with her sails spread and her flag unfurled, encounters many a casualty. When the storm comes, her timbers are put to the strain as she labours in the trough of the sea. The blast over, she glides on again under sunshine and in smooth waters. The careful captain looks well to her safety and studies her course till he brings her to the "desired haven," where she is received with hail and welcome. A safe arrival after a successful voyage is a fair picture of salvation. Yet the sea has engulfed many a noble vessel! We cannot say with certainty that the ship which puts to sea will always reach its destination. So there is danger of "shipwreck" being made of "faith." The hazards of probation are numerous. Comparing the two things, the guarantee for the

(1) Matt. x. 22.

salvation of believers in Christ, is immeasurably stronger than can be given for the safe landing of a vessel. There are perils sufficient to exercise our caution. But encouragements abound. We shall be saved. Two strong reasons are adduced to help our confidence. The first is,

Our altered relationship. We were enemies—now we are reconciled. Condemnation is hereditary. Before we had personal consciousness or active powers we were regarded as enemies. Also the reconciling device antedated our actual offences. The argument before us holds firm irrespective of this accident. The expiation of *our* sins took place before one of them existed in act and fact. Only one generation of mankind could have their sins both atoned for and remitted within their life-time, those, namely, who were contemporary with the crucifixion. Generation rather than direct creation being the means of human existence, succession of time was unavoidable. The successive generations of men could not witness the deed of atonement by which the benefit of remission comes to them. A great number lived and died at periods of time preceding the incarnation, either near or remote. Others appear on the stage of life in long succession after the atonement is made. A mere fraction of the race lived contemporary with Jesus Christ. Of these very few were in personal contact with Him. Still it is true that *when* we were enemies *we* were reconciled by the death of Christ. Upon the

foresight of our guilt the expiation was made. Its fulness of virtue considered, our posteriority to it in no way prevents its application. Neither were those who lived before the transaction thereby barred out of benefit. Paul overlooks the accident of time and fastens on the condition men are found in at any time. He contemplates them as objects of Divine displeasure. His argument is that when they were such, Divine love was so strong as to contrive costly means of adjustment. If so, what may be expected now when the repairer of the breach has made reconciliation honourable? If He bridged over the chasm of separation by so dear a sacrifice, will He not be ready to pardon? Having actually pardoned, will He not carry out His gracious purpose? We were enemies. We are now friends. It would be contrary to reason and experience for us to be less loved in a state of friendship than when we were aliens. As we have to deal with one free from the caprice which disgraces human friendships, it is no presumption to say we shall be saved. The second argument is,

The altered condition of Jesus Christ. We were reconciled by *His death*. We shall be saved by *His life*. As Paul was given to antithesis some have intimated that this clause is added for rhetorical embellishment. "By His death" and "by His life" balance and equalize the verse. We acknowledge the correspondence without admitting that it was intended for literary elegance. Though there are passages of

great beauty in Paul's letters, style was not his aim. Hard logic was his province. This clause is meant for argument. If the death of Christ could bring us into terms of friendship with God, shall not His life be fraught with higher benefit? The life intended in this argument is not His life on earth, though it was noble, and for our good. His life after death is rich in assurance, whether you think of it as resumed by His own proper power, or as restored to Him by gift from the Father. It is capable of being viewed both ways. He laid down His life and took it again. He had power to do both. If He had self-reviving power what cannot He do for us? Or, say that God the Father raised Him from the dead to testify His satisfaction with the work He had accomplished, the deed betokens lasting benefit for those on whose behalf He completed that work. His death on earth amid enemies, in weakness, humiliation, and shame, brought us much good. His life in heaven, with God and angels, encircled with glory, a life vicarious and priestly, will "much more" redound to our advantage. He had power on earth to cure sickness, to cancel sin, to cast out devils, to cleanse the leprosy of both soul and body. Shall He not have more power in heaven? With His hands nailed to the cross, He spoke as if He held in them the keys of paradise. He promised a dying malefactor admission through its gates that self-same day. Much more now must His power be augmented when He speaks from "the excellent

glory." "I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death."¹ Much as we love to linger at His cross, and weep and wonder and adore, it is needful for us to visit His empty sepulchre and be assured that He lives. We rejoice that He died, for by His death we are reconciled. We rejoice that He lives, for by His life we shall be saved. He lives to superintend the affairs of His church, and to carry forward the object of His death to its consummation. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."² Amongst the lessons He taught His disciples, this was prominent, that His life after crucifixion would be the source and security of their happiness. "Because I live, ye shall live also."³

Let us comfort ourselves with these words. Being reconciled by Christ's death, or which is equivalent, "justified by His blood," let us cherish hope, and give ourselves up to Christian activity, feeling well assured that the issue is secure. Also it hastens on. "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."⁴ Whilst we are strong in confidence let us evidence our Christian character by saintly conduct, and guard against the presumption into which over-fed hope might run. With heavenly hope join holy fear, and let them temper and qualify each other. If ye do these things ye shall never fall.

(1) Rev. i. 18. (2) Heb. vii. 25. (3) John xiv. 19. (4) Rom. xiii. 11.

DISCOURSE IV.

ADAM THE FEDERAL HEAD OF THE RACE.

ROMANS v. 11, 12.

"And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

IN taking these verses together for exposition, we cross the customary order. It is generally assumed that there is a break at the end of the eleventh verse, and that the twelfth begins a new theme. We doubt the correctness of this assumption, and think the two verses ought to be combined.

The transitional phrase, "and not only so," is a sign of passing on to another point, and working in an additional item. It is used in the third verse of this chapter, where it introduces a rather startling addition to what had gone before. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also." In this its second occurrence, it is a heightening of the confidence, and a strengthening of the argument expressed just before. Not only shall we be saved from wrath hereafter by

the death and life of Jesus, but we enjoy great happiness at present. Foretakening that final felicity, "we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the nearest reference of "not only so." Linking it to the tenth verse may exhaust the writer's intention. Knowing the habit which Paul has of bringing forward his thread of discourse, some expositors give a wider range to the transitional words, and make them refer to all that lies within the foregoing scope of this chapter. Though we do not see this, we will not contend. So far we are clear. We have present proof of the Divine favour, and large instalments of future bliss.

"We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ," is an advance on previous statements. It is said before, we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Then "we glory in tribulations also." Now, as a further advance, "we also joy in God." Although the verbs in these three clauses are rendered differently, "rejoice," "glory," and "joy," they are all the same word in the original. To joy in God, is more than to rejoice in hope (ver. 2), or to rejoice in troubles (ver. 3). It is more than both combined. It indicates a high degree of gracious feeling; if not rapture, at least sensible pulsations and heart-throbs of a rapturous nature. The higher life in religion frees the believing soul from low fear and base drudgery, and gives it wing-power to soar towards the fountain of light. Short of this there is much good. A simple desire to obey God is good.

Peace is a fine frame of mind. Assurance is rich in enjoyment. Hope of heaven is a firm stay to a trouble-tossed soul. But joy in God overtops all these. It is an advanced post of attainment. To joy in God is to appreciate His character, to delight in His perfections, and boldly to appropriate His love. It is making free with Him without foregoing your reverence, reckoning on His power to protect you, His mercy to pardon you, His grace to sanctify you, and the whole wealth of His being as expended in your interests. It is to say, "Thou art my God." This we may do, though we be not of Abrahamic descent. "Is He the God of the Jews only? is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also."¹ He is not monopolized by the seed of Abraham, though He promised to be a God to him and to his seed after him. Time has shown that the children of faith are the better part of Abraham's family. Such only are entitled to make their "boast of God." Joying in God is the high privilege of Christians. Peter speaks of a "joy unspeakable," and Paul of a "rejoicing alway." Even in Old Testament times there were excellent specimens of it. Far back in that dispensation, we find a rejoicing Hannah, who made her boast of God and magnified Him with her tongue. So there was a David who gloried in God as his rock and fortress, his God and strength. A rejoicing Habakkuk rose so superior to creature dependence, as to rejoice in the

(1) Rom. iii. 29.

Lord amid desolation and famine. When the fields ceased to be green, and the trees to blossom, and fruit crops failed, and fold and stall were empty, yet he joyed in God. Ahead of these ancient saints by a whole dispensation, joy in God becomes us much more.

“We have now received the atonement.” Great as our respect is for the theological term “atonement,” which denotes the vicarious sacrifice that procured our pardon, we prefer the word in the margin—“reconciliation.” We do not receive the atonement. He receives it to whom it is made. We receive the reconciliation, its fruit and consequence. Just so we are said to receive Christ, and to receive mercy, and to receive the forgiveness of sins; all which expressions are equivalents.

The twelfth verse which we have now reached is beset with difficulty. The difficulty has been increased by supposing that a new subject is introduced. Very injudiciously some have prefixed the paragraphic mark to it, which the first word forbids. No good writer would begin a new subject with “wherefore” or “therefore.” Paul’s line of thought and argument is still being carried forward without break or pause. He introduces this reference to the mischief done by “one man’s offence,” to illustrate the position he has affirmed of “one man, Jesus Christ,” having done so much good for all men. The principle of representation appears largely prior to this. All the benefits

discoursed of come through one man. Now he proceeds to insert an instance in which one man brought great evil upon the whole body of men. To sever this illustration from the current of the argument, as if it were a new subject, tends to confuse the reader, and make him lose his way.

On reading this verse with attention, we perceive that the sentence is unfinished, and the sense incomplete. The punctuation indicates so much, as it closes with a colon rather than with a period or full stop. Where to find the other part of the sentence is the difficulty. Not to burden our exposition with all that the learned have proposed in the way of relief, we draw attention to two ways of solution. The first is parenthesis. The translation has recourse to this, throwing no less than five long verses within two curved strokes. Good reading requires all such interjected matter to be pronounced in an undertone, and on passing the second curve, to lift the voice again to its former pitch. Where is the reader so skilful in elocution as to do so in the present case, and make out the sense by dint of simply reading the words ! If the entire parenthesis be omitted, and you read only what lies outside the curve lines, you cannot bring out a smooth sense. Therefore parenthesis fails as a resource of explanation.

Ellipsis is in our judgment the only solver of the difficulty. We are happy to avail ourselves of the suggestions of able scholars and critics who know how

to treat the Scriptures at once with reverence and erudition. Following these, we find there is choice between ways of supply. One way is to supply at the *end* of the verse, thus, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: " *so by another man righteousness and life are provided for all men.* By a very simple rule of grammar *as* requires *so* to follow and balance it. In this imperfect verse there is nothing but an accidental "so," which cannot be construed to serve that office. The critical reader will find examples of the antithetical "so" in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-first verses of this chapter. Had not Paul been accustomed to ellipsis, there might have been the same antithesis here. Another method of supply is to drop in a few words near the *beginning* of the verse, close after the word wherefore, thus, "Wherefore," *blessings have come upon us through an individual man, just* "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." This second method, which we decidedly prefer, has something very like it in a passage quoted by the learned author whom we consult.¹ "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods."² The rhetorical difficulty thus disposed of, we hope to the reader's satisfaction, we proceed with our exposition touching the doctrine found in the passage.

(1) Alford. (2) Matt. xxv. 14.

"By one man," Adam, "sin entered into the world." Two important factors in the introduction of sin into our world are entirely ignored, though they both acted in priority to Adam. Did not sin come in by serpent agency, or by Satanic influence acting on the innocent brute? Paul is reticent of this fact, though not ignorant of it. Did not sin enter by one woman, overcome by guile, seduced by false and flattering promise to the belief of a lie? The writer knew about this too, but vails it as foreign to his purpose. The man was the responsible party. With him lay the determinative power to admit or bar out sin. Sin was not violently forced into the world by the tempter. Neither was the woman the door of entrance, though she might be the porch adjacent to the door. She was but a private person. Adam was more. He was the Head. Her sin did not necessitate his as his has necessitated ours. If we are disposed to be angry about the affair, and to revolt at it as a wrong done to mankind, ourselves included, we may properly overlook the woman, and turn our unreasonable and unavailing ire upon her husband. Better perhaps forbear animadversion altogether. We are in the difficulty, and cannot mend ourselves by wrathful demonstrations. The man certainly was the door. If he had not sinned another state of things would have existed, about which we care not to speculate. He *did* sin, and the consequences are with us. All the sin that has followed hangs by the first transgression. It was not

so that if he sinned nobody else need sin. It was so that if he sinned others would sin. Under derivative law his sin was the precursor of many sins. But for his relation to posterity his fault might have remained with himself. The next man if not related to, and descended from him, might have shunned sin, and so might others. Had creation instead of generation supplied the world with men, sin might have been confined to Adam. Generation being the order, the sin of the one man became of necessity a seed of sin. Doctrinal accuracy obliges us to put it thus. The doctrine grows out of the facts. If we take pains to give the dogma its full breadth and outline, let no one be so ungenerous as to think we have pleasure in finding it so. We revolt as much at the existing evil, as the most delicate and sensitive objectors to the doctrine. If our head were waters and our eyes fountains of tears, we confess a perpetual weeping would befit so sad a catastrophe as has befallen the world. In the very presence of the remedy we think it proper to weep.

“And death” entered “by sin.” As sure as sin came in by Adam, so sure death came in by sin. There was causation in both cases. It did not happen that men sinned after Adam. They sinned in consequence of his sin. It did not happen that death followed upon sin. Sin produced death. Sometimes one thing follows another without the first being the cause of the second, or the second the effect of the first. A

man goes into a house to salute his neighbour, who while he is there drops down on the floor and expires. The friendly visit was a mere accident. Something else was the cause. Death follows sin not as a mere subsequent and separate fact, but as its proper effect. Sin kills as fire burns. Yet we must think of something more than physical cause and effect. The idea of moral desert is due. "The *wages* of sin is death."¹ The interdict relating to the forbidden tree was not imposed on account of any death-producing quality in the fruit, but was a mere test of obedience. The violation of that interdict was visited with death as a penalty for disobedience.

Death was threatened to take effect on the self-same day with transgression. Accordingly, the effect was instantaneous, though at the first not entire. The offender did not fall lifeless on the earth on the very instant when he disobeyed. He survived that day, and lived several hundreds of years. It was not intended that he should expire the same hour he offended. His death was due then, and the forfeit of his life might have been exacted at once. Gracious purpose prevailed to prolong his days. The penalty was paid in process and by instalments, the first of which was exacted on the day of transgression. If he then became mortal, exposed to disease and decay, liable to wrinkles and infirmity, was he not under sentence, and just living upon the merciful reprieve of

(1) Rom. vi. 23.

Him whose law he had broken ? The reprieve was long, but it reached its period. "And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years : and he died."¹ He was not the first to die in that full sense. He witnessed the mortal effect of his sin in others before he realized it fully in his own person.

It is sometimes objected that there was death in the world, in the animal creation, prior to the Adamic transgression. The disclosures of geologic science are pleaded in this behalf. The testimony of the rocks is taken to show that entire races of extinct animals lived and died before man's time. This is quite out of the road of our text, which says that sin brought death upon *men*, and makes no reference to the inferior animals or to pre-Adamite periods. The adversaries of revelation must be keen of opposition when they beat the air thus, and strike where there is nothing to hit. Theology carries its explanation of death further than we have indicated, making it include spiritual death, the loss of God's favour, of holy desire and hope, and the final condition of the impenitent. This we receive and endorse, though we do not stay to enlarge.

"And so death *passed* upon all men." In the translation here is a new verb. In the original it is the same simple verb compounded with a prefix (dia) that increases its value. First, it is said that sin *entered* ; next, that death *entered*, the verb though

(1) Gen. v. 5.

not repeated, being understood. Now a new statement is made, and the verb is intensified by being differently combined. Instead of "death entered into the world," we have it "and so death *passed upon* all men." This is much more exact. It makes the meaning unmistakable. Though the world means men, and men in the mass, it is capable of more or less import, liable to mean less than the entire world, though still a great number. A clause added to exclude restriction, shuts the reader up to accept it at the widest. It is so here. Sin and death both entered. But how far did they go after entering? May we hope that they entered the world without going through it in all its zones and climes, affecting all its tribes and peoples? A disease sometimes enters a large household and affects no more than one or two of its members, sparing more than it strikes. An invading army sometimes enters a country of great extent, ransacks the capital, and retires leaving the provinces intact. Passing over the whole region is more to be dreaded. What is the extent of the injury done upon the human family by the entrance of sin? How many are hurt by it and its terrible companion—death? The answer is brief and sad, but decisive and full. "Death passed upon all men." It has been rendered, "death spread through unto all men,"¹ or "was transmitted unto all men."² It is not said that *sin* passed upon all men. But since death can only go where sin leads the way, it would

(1) Alford. (2) Bloomfield.

be no presumption to predicate the same of sin as of death. Sin leads and death follows. Wherever you see death effected on a human being, sin has been there, either actually committed or legally charged. The death is evidence.

“For that all have sinned.” On this clause the matter to be decided is, whether it means all have sinned personally, or all have sinned virtually by their connection with Adam. The marginal reading, “in whom all have sinned,” is decisive for men having sinned in their representative. Able scholars of opposite schools in theology, allow that such a rendering is eligible. Candour requires us to concede that the referring of “whom” to the “one man” before named, makes a remote antecedent and an awkward construction. If we surrendered the marginal reading, we still could not give up the position of liability to penalty through the offence of the one man. It cannot mean that all die on account of personal sin, since a large proportion of mankind die before they are capable of accountable action. The doctrine here taught, and supported by other parts of holy writ is, that *all human beings die for the first sin of the first man.* Those who die before the age of accountability, cannot die for their own sins, having none. Those who die after crossing the line of responsibility, go the way of all the earth from the same cause as the others. Indeed, those who overlive their infancy, and die only after the average course of life is attained, suffer in part before they

commit their first sin. The penalty of sin is not reserved for the last moment. It is distributed over the whole of mortal existence.

Let us discuss this matter a little closer. There are some few persons who die, in a certain sense, for their own sins, inasmuch as their sins precipitate their death. As an example, we instance that generation of Israelites that died in the wilderness. Of all the full-grown persons who came out of Egypt with intent to go to Canaan, only two were admitted, Caleb and Joshua. These two lived to a good age. Joshua reached a hundred and ten years. Caleb's age is not stated, but long before his death, when he was eighty five, he bore testimony that he was as capable of military duty as he was forty years before. Their murmuring, discontented brethren died for their own sins, short of threescore and ten, or about "fourscore years."¹ Their bones were laid in the unconsecrated wilderness. Now we may say Joshua and Caleb died on account of Adam's sin, and the sinful murmurers earlier on account of their own sin. There was a sentence out against them due to the one man that involved all in common. That they could not escape. But they hurried it into execution by personal misconduct. The sins for which they suffered this curtailment, were not their ordinary every day sins, but some very aggravated offences. "There is a sin unto death."² Whether we commit that mortal offence

(1) Ps. xc. 10. (2) 1 John v. 16.

or not, we shall die. We are death-due to begin with. We claim it as heritors. Besides, we do much common sin, the desert of which is not added to strengthen our claim. But if we become very demonstrative, and push into the sphere of deadly sin, we antedate our death, it may be, by a number of years. After all, this "sin unto death," or dying for our own sin, does not clash with the prior statement that all men die on account of one man. That one man brought mortality in. All that we do by outrageous offence is to hurry on its full effect.

The sense of the passage we have discussed is not easy of ascertainment. It is not so demonstrable as to carry the understandings of men all in one direction. To say that all who die have sinned personally, is contrary to fact. To say that all have sinned virtually, or in Adam, and *are treated as sinners*, seems violent, and shocks our sense of equity. To say that the death of "innocents" has no relation to sin whatever, is a contradiction to the doctrine expressly taught here and strongly corroborated in other passages. Between difficulties some will adhere to one view and some to another. For our part, we think the doctrine of the passage is as we have expounded it.

This dogma of sin and death in Adam is amongst the "some things hard to be understood" in the epistles of "our beloved brother Paul." If the reader feels stunned and alarmed at our exposition, and by consequence demurs and muses questioningly, we

profess sympathy with him. We also find difficulties, though we cherish no doubts. We recommend any one sorely exercised with this sad topic, to look farther on, and connect it with the counterpart doctrine of righteousness and life by a vicarious sufferer. There he will find solution to his difficulties, and ample balance to what he considers a heavy wrong imposed on him and all mankind. If we "cannot attain" to the full measure of truth because it is "high" and "wonderful," let not our speculations damage our spiritual profiting. Let us seek peace to our consciences, and rest for our souls, in the Lord Jesus, who is the second Adam.

DISCOURSE V.

THE FEDERAL HEADSHIP OF ADAM AND
CHRIST.

ROMANS v. 18—17.

“For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is* the gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification. For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”

“THE law” is the law of Moses, and may be understood of the Decalogue, which is the germ of the Mosaic economy; or, in a wider sense, of the entire law, including civil regulation and religious ceremony. As Moses’ name appears in the very next verse, there is no room for question about the law. “Until the law” means up to the time of the law being formally given. This was a considerable period, one of the three great divisions of time, before the law, under the law, and

under Christ. It covered about two thousand five hundred years. By so long a time sin took the start of the law, for it was from the beginning or nearly so. Of course if it was in the world *until* the law was given, it was in also *afterwards*. The writer could not intend to deny its continuance after that period. The other rendering which some plead for, "*during* the law sin was in the world," as if it meant from the commencement of the law to its abolition, we pass over, as not making the text any clearer. In point of fact, sin was in the world before the law and under the law, and is so in the gospel age as well. Paul has a reason for pointing out its existence in the interim specified, as the sequel shows. He means that all that long time sin was active and of deadly effect, though the law had not been inaugurated. Until the law sin was in the world, and did not diminish then, but became stronger and more obvious.

"Sin was in the world." The easiest explanation of this is, that the men who peopled the world were actual sinners. Cain was a sinner before there was a law to say, "Thou shalt not kill." Cain's posterity were sinners. We cannot pronounce Abel free from sin, nor Seth with his godly seed. Sin multiplied so in the antediluvian age, that a flood was brought "upon the world of the ungodly." Noah escaped the penalty, but only through grace. "The wickedness of man was great in the earth."¹ "The earth" was

(1) Gen. vi. 5.

“filled with violence,”¹ till God would tolerate it no longer. Its sinful population was swept away. As it re-peopled sin showed itself again, and rose to a great pitch, till it was “great” and “grievous.” The dictates of nature were violated before the sanctities of family life were defined. Parental authority was contemned before there was a law to say, “Honour thy father and thy mother.” Men followed their own passions and devices, doing what was right in their own eyes in defiance of their moral instincts, before morality had an external embodiment in law. There being no published law, there was no transgression, though there was much sin, two things nearly related though distinct.

“Sin was in the world”—the sin of that one man by whom it entered. It was seen in its effects. It was charged upon his posterity. The penalty took effect upon himself, partly during his life, more broadly at his death. It reached on to his posterity. In the narrative of the fall there is no distinct recognition of Adam’s descendants being involved in Adam’s sin. Only himself as an individual is named as liable. “In the day that thou eatest thereof *thou* shalt surely die.”² In a scheme of revelation that unfolds gradually, have we any right to expect every particular of it to be named at first? May it not be reserved for Paul to declare what Moses had no commandment of the Lord to write? Yet Moses writes that Adam

(1) Gen. vi. 18. (2) Gen. ii. 17.

begat a son in his own image. His sin was in the world ever after he committed it. It was in Cain, and Abel, and Seth, and sickly Enos, and has been perpetuated till now. "Until the law sin was in the world." The evidence is, that people died till then. There was no law published, their breach of which could incur death. They did not eat of the forbidden tree. Their representative ate of it, and therefore they died. To this second interpretation, though it taxes our understanding, and bears hard upon our sense of equity, we give the preference. What precedes and follows requires it.

"But sin is not imputed when there is no law," as it is when there is a law. It is necessary to bring in the comparative principle here as understood though not expressed. An earlier statement may assist us to understand this. In the fifteenth verse of the foregoing chapter it is said, "where no law is, there is no transgression." It is not said, where no law is, there is no sin. Without a law formally announced, there may be sin. In this same epistle it is expressly affirmed, that some "sinned without law." But there cannot be transgression without a law. Transgression is sin magnified and made worse. "The strength of sin is the law."¹ The absence of the law makes a difference in the penalty, which falls more lightly in that case. Though sin without law is an evil thing and punishable, and has been actually punished, it is

(1) 1 Cor. xv. 56.

not so severely dealt with as sin committed in bold defiant violation of a law. God "winked at" pagan sin where no positive law had been published. When He punished it, it was with the punishment of sin and not of transgression. The sin which brought death was a transgression, as it is expressly styled in the next verse. It was the "sin unto death," enhanced by a positive precept, the violation of which entailed that fearful penalty. Adam's sin was transgression, the very type and reference of it. "If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom."¹ "But they like men (margin, *like Adam*) have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me."² "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."³ The greater sin was his as he was not seduced, but committed the offence with his eyes open. His was the sin, the sin of sins, deliberate, daring. It was transgression. Against sin so characterized we behove to be much on our guard. "Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."⁴ The circumstance of there being no formal statutes in the long interim specified, throws us back upon the sin of the first man, to account for the death that took place within that extensive period. Though men sinned, they did not transgress a published law.

(1) Job xxxi. 33. (2) Hos. vi. 7. (3) 1 Tim. ii. 14. (4) Ps. xix. 13.

Though they died, it was not for their own sin, for sin is not imputed as death-worthy where there is no law.

“ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses,” as much as if every person within that time had eaten of the forbidden fruit. They were as fully under the power of death as subjects under an acknowledged monarch. The writer speaks in a personification, and makes death imperial. He is not content to say that men died. He adds rhetorical emphasis to the statement, and says death *reigned*. “ The king of terrors ” reigned over men before monarchy was known, as well as after. Righteous Abel stooped beneath his sceptre. The Head of men owned his supremacy and bowed to his stroke. Holy Seth, the second name to Adam’s in sacred genealogy, was enrolled among his subjects. Sickly Enos followed in the train ; and so of the rest, the long-lived Methusaleh himself not excepted. Only one man escaped without paying the full tribute. Even he when on earth was under mortal conditions. Between Adam and Moses he was the only exception. Patriarchs, priests, and princes, as well as the common throng of men, did homage to death.

“ Even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” There are two classes of persons intended in this clause. The word *even* shuts us up to this conclusion. First of all, death reigned over all men within that time, just as in all other times. But besides this, he reigned even over them that had not sinned like Adam. Some of the

number who died had not sinned in Adam's style. But this evidently implies that some others had so sinned. We require to know what is meant by sinning "after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Those who did not sin in that manner, did they sin in some other way, or did they simply not sin at all? If some died who did not sin at all, they answer the description of those who did not sin as Adam did. Not sinning in any way, they could not of course sin in that way. We are disposed to think that children who die before they reach a responsible age, are meant. To these we may add a smaller class—full-grown persons of too feeble a mind to be responsible for their own acts. Before the giving of the law, we presume that death did much execution on the young, as we know he has done since, and does now. The love of mothers, the care of nurses, and the skill of physicians notwithstanding, the amount of infant mortality is great. Without such an order as Pharaoh's to drown the new-born sons of the Hebrews, or such a decree as Herod's to slay the infants of Bethlehem, a very large number of those born into the world die before they are competent to "discern between their right hand and their left hand."¹ Why their death? Death comes of sin. But they sinned none. Who did sin that all these should die? Adam.

Can we find another class of persons who *did* sin after the manner of Adam? We can find none who

¹ (1) *Jonah* iv. 11.

sinned exactly so, as none were put under the test of a forbidden tree. It cannot mean that some violated a positive law, as no such law existed. Our only resource is to understand it of sin committed deliberately at a thoughtful age. The sins of manhood, done with knowledge and discernment of their nature, against the dictates of conscience or the moral sense, are after the type of Adam's sin. His was not the thoughtless act of childhood, or the heedless rashness of youth. It was the act of one capable of anticipating consequences and weighing results. It was not done by oversight or inadvertence. In likening others to him we must necessarily have recourse to the comparative principle, of which we availed ourselves in dealing with the second part of the thirteenth verse. No one can sin in exact parallel with him. His posterity are not as he was to begin probation. They have not his sound judgment, orderly affections, and ready conscience. Before they commit any grave and deliberate offence, they have committed many minor faults that have paved the way to it, a disadvantage he never knew, having had no childhood. In the interval of time between Adam and Moses, the sins of men's riper years were in the similitude of Adam's transgression, though not charged upon them as if they had lived under positive law.

Death reigned from Adam to Moses over all human beings, both those who died soon and those who lived long, those who sinned in full manhood and those

whose only sins were the small faults of childhood, or who, dying in infancy, were never in fault at all. Death reigned *even* over this last-named class that fell under his stroke so soon as never to have opportunity or power to sin. He reigned over them all and equally. Those who lived long were as decidedly his subjects as those who drooped in early death. They were born under sentence, born to die, and lived a mortal life. The birth-wail and death-groan are both confessions of subjection to the ghastly tyrant.

“Who is the figure (*type*) of Him that was to come.” The long-expected Messiah is clearly meant by “Him that was to come.” John the Baptist’s delegates said to Him, “Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another ?”¹ After witnessing the miracle of the five barley loaves, some said, “This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”² Revised translation has put it, “a type of Him that *is* to come,” and not as we have it, “that *was* to come.”³ The apostle is conceived of as speaking prospectively of His second Advent. He will come again to fulfil the expectations of His people, by reversing as the second Adam the evils incurred by the first.

The point of likeness between Adam and Christ was simply that of relative position. The one was a public man, so was the other. Each of them was a captain in human affairs, though they worked to very different issues in the interests of mankind. Representation is

(1) Matt. xi. 8. (2) John vi. 14. (3) Alford.

an acknowledged principle often acted on within smaller limits than those which Adam and Christ respectively fill. So, for example, a father represents the members of his family, and wins or loses for them. How mankind are affected by the two representative persons is discussed in what follows. Points of difference are indicated from the fifteenth to the seventeenth verse. The remainder of the chapter is occupied with points of agreement. The differential points will be sufficient for us to overtake in this discourse. The first is in

Verse 15. "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift." The one is not an exact contrast to the other as if the gift was a bare balance to the offence, a setting of the beam even and no more. When goodness redresses wrongs and reverses evil occurrences, it does not stop at the equalizing point. It has a strong tendency to overgo the mark and overfill the measure. When justice has demands to make, it is careful not to pass its limits by a hair breadth. It is very likely to stop nothing short either. It is of its nature to be exact—just. Mercy is different. Once it begins to work, it keeps in action. It delights to bestow largely, without measure or stint. The offence, that is the fall, the first sin, including its effects, and the free gift, that is the restoration from the fall, are not the one *so* as the other. The quantity of good overbalances the amount of evil, as is expressly affirmed in the remainder of the verse. "For if through the offence

of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." The "if" in this clause is merely logical, indicating concession, not doubt. "Many be dead," means that all men are. Mankind in the mass comes under the stroke of death, the offence of one man being the procuring cause. The "much more" is liable to two senses. It might be the argument with stronger reason so freely used by Paul. Then the sense would be—if God has allowed an injury to come upon us through the demerit of one man, much more, His gracious character being considered, will He offer and bestow a benefit by the merit of another one man. The other sense, which we decidedly prefer, is obtained by construing the "much more" with the verb "hath abounded." Then the sense is, that the benefit brought to us by Christ is greater than the injury brought on us by Adam. Grace abounds in Jesus. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it *more abundantly*."¹ A surplus may be looked for when grace opens its hand. When justice takes its due, it is stinted to so much. When grace gives of its bounty, it takes margin and abounds. It abounds in promise-making and assurance. "Wherein God, willing *more abundantly* to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath."² It abounds in pardoning. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the

(1) John x. 10. (2) Heb. vi. 17.

unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”¹ It abounds in helping to a completeness what it begins. “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”² Now will God’s grace do us more good than Adam’s fault did us harm!

“The grace of God,” and “the gift by grace,” are distinguishable as cause and effect, the former denoting simply God’s love which moved Him to give His Son to work out redemption. It is just His compassionate love. “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death that He by *the grace of God* should taste death for every man.”³

The offence has affected *many*, and the gracious gift abounds to *many*. Is the term equal in both cases? In the first instance, it means no less than all men, for in Adam all die. In the second instance, it means all who believe, which is less than the whole of men, though a great number. “By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.”⁴ The actual enjoyment of grace in this life and of happiness in the life to come, will not in point of fact be realized by all men. The provision and the offer of grace are commensurate with the evil of the fall. This meets the demands of equity, and warrants the Apostle’s parallel.

(1) Isa. iv. 7. (2) 2 Pet. i. 11. (3) Heb. ii. 9. (4) Isa. liii. 11.

As this question meets us again at a remoter point, we pass it with this scanty notice at present. The second differential point appears in

Verse 16. "And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is* the gift." It is generally thought that a supply is required after the words "and not as." Commentators agree that there should be some supply, though they differ in making it. The italics in the translation are acceptable and helpful. John Wesley's translation of the verse is ingenious and graphic. "And not as *the loss* by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the sentence *was* by one *offence* to condemnation: but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification." Sentence was formally passed on the first man immediately after his one offence. The court was small. The only parties we read of as present were, the Judge, the culprits, and the tempter. Judgment was given to condemnation of all the parties concerned in the offence. On examining the narrative in Genesis, there appears no clear statement of Adam's posterity being involved in the judgment given. History and apostolic teaching show that they were.

The consequence of the first offence is covered and counteracted by the free gift. That one offence is provided for in its whole breadth of result. Moreover, all the offences that Adam's children themselves commit are pardonable in the same way. The one offence is annulled by the free gift so far as posterity were affected by it. The many offences of each individual

are eligible to be done away in the same manner. Therefore the free gift reaches farther for benefit than the one sin did for injury. It is to be considered that we have a course of trial in this world, and are personally responsible for our own actions. If it be said that our bad living is the outcome of a condition of mind entailed on us by descent from a sinful ancestral head, we offer no reply. We accept this as sound doctrine. If in closer application of this dogma it be affirmed that hereditary depravity necessitates every wicked act we perform, we demur to the statement. Many sins we have done might have been forborne, as also many omitted duties might have been discharged. We were in circumstances to have done otherwise. Allow that to have sinned to some extent was a necessity, we cannot extend the admission to each and every wrong deed of our lives. After deducting for inborn corruption, bad example, and strong temptation, much of our wrong-doing must be laid at the door of wilful deliberate action. Our consciences attest this. We have sinned after the similitude of our first father. The free gift reaches to these many personal offences, even to such as are of a deep hue. It avails to take the colour out of our "scarlet" and "crimson" sins. It dissolves the dark "thick cloud" of our transgressions, the accumulation of years. The debt of "fifty denaria" is forgiven, and more, that of "five hundred," yea, even of "ten thousand talents." The weeping Magdalen is dismissed with the sweet

assurance that "her sins which are many are forgiven." It is a fine contrast—condemned by one offence of another man, freed and justified from many offences of our own !

The first clause of the seventeenth verse, "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one," is better rendered in the margin, "For if by one offence death reigned by one." There is no word in the original for *man*. Yet its insertion somewhere in the clause is necessary. We would put it after the word "one" in the second instance, thus—"For if by one offence death reigned by one *man*; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."

The "much more" is the argument with stronger reason. The point to which it runs is, that believers in Christ shall much more have life through Him. They are described as receivers. "They which receive abundance of grace." The rest of mankind are for the time being lost sight of. The ultimate benefit of redemption is confined to those who become actual partakers of grace within the period of probation. There are others who do not receive, but reject grace. It is brought to their door, offered, urged and pressed on them with much tender pleading, but still not received. Distinguishable from these, "they which receive abundance of grace," are persons who submit to gospel conditions, who take in the grace so freely offered. They receive Christ, and with Him all

blessings suitable to their guilty, fallen state. It is not just one receiving act the word denotes, but a succession of acts. "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."¹ The willing reception of gospel benefits is, no doubt, an item in the argument. If we were brought into thralldom by one man sinning, our own concurrence having nothing to do with our condemnation, much more shall we be benefited by the vicarious interference of one who suffered, whose undertaking we hail with gratitude, and accept with humility and confidence.

Observe a contrast—"death reigned by one," and "they shall reign in life by one." In the former clause, death is the king and men are the subjects; in the latter, not life reigns, but men reign in life. The condition of the ransomed is life in its most exalted state. Heaven, the seat of final happiness, is a kingdom prepared for the children of grace. There, one Lord reigns over all. But the subjects themselves are royal. It is not mere life they have, taxed with conditions, reducing its value; but noble, blessed life, of which the highest state of earthly life, is but a faint shadow. They shall reign as kings, seated on thrones, every head adorned with an unfading crown. Let us be encouraged to holy living, and cheered under temporary suffering for Christ. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with *Him*."²

The spirit of complaint may well be rebuked by the

(1) John i. 16. (2) 2 Tim. ii. 12.

ample provision made to reverse the effects of sin. It is true we commence life under the burden of a fore-gone condemnation, to which we contributed nothing by personal action. Our sense of justice takes offence at this arrangement. But what about the generous counteractive which more than covers the disadvantage? Let us not ignore this. We would never have been called upon the stage of action to meet the conflict of a probation with such solemn alternatives at issue, if there had been no antidote against sin, and no aids to holiness provided. It is simply unjust to complain of what has been imposed on Adam's account, and to shut out of view the balance of benefit introduced by Christ. Let both sides of our condition be candidly weighed, and every murmuring tongue will be silenced, and dissatisfaction will give place to acquiescence and gratitude.

DISCOURSE VI.

CHRIST AND ADAM COMPARED.

ROMANS V. 18—19.

“Therefore, as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

THIS section sums up the argument about Adam and Christ. Whereas the foregoing verses point out the differences between these two public persons, and show how they are “*not as*” each other, the section before us indicates in what respects they *are* “*as*” each other. The eighteenth verse repeats what has been already propounded. The likeness between the two federal heads is re-stated, the difference before named requiring to be kept in mind.

The supplied words, marked by italics, are necessary to make the original run smooth and easy. If the translators had not done us this kindness, each reader would have been obliged mentally to supply something to fill up the gaps where they occur. Many an unskilful reader would have found it difficult to bridge

over the ellipses. It is cautiously and reverently done, as the helping words are drawn from the context, and brought down from the sixteenth verse. "*Judgment came upon all men*," and "*the free gift came upon all men*." It has been suggested that still another small supply would improve and balance the verse. "Therefore, as by the offence of one *judgment came upon all men to condemnation of death*; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life*."

The marginal readings are worthy of adoption. It is judged better to read "as by one offence, even so by one righteousness." As this is done upon literary grounds, so it accords well with doctrine and fact. It is true that by the offence of one (man), as the translation says, judgment came upon all men. But something more definite than this is true. It came by one man rather than by several, if we accept the translation. If we amend it by taking the margin, the meaning is that sentence of death took effect for only "one offence." Adam brought death on mankind by a single transgression. It was not the result of repeated offences. It was by eating of the forbidden fruit once. There is no record of a second offence. Say that he never touched the fruit of that tree again, this would avail nothing. The deed was done, and the consequence inevitable. No regret or future abstinence from it, could alter it and no careful forbearance in relation to that fruit could undo the injury. Suppose he had

sinned no more in that way, his abstinence would tell for nothing. Had he even avoided sinning in any other way, this could have had no effect to check the ravages of death on his posterity. What his personal behaviour was after the fall is not recorded in history. We are left to imagine it, even if it be lawful to do that. It is immaterial to us what he did after. His personal conduct was then of importance chiefly to himself. The evils which have come upon men from their erring Head have no relation whatever to his sins after the fall, whether many or few, or any or none. That one terrible offence opened the floodgate of evil. It was an offence against divine authority, pure and simple. It was a breach of a positive precept rather than a violation of right where the reason was contained in the interdicted action itself. The indifferent nature of the action affects not the turpitude of the sin, unless it be to enhance it. Thoughtful persons allow that it was for that very reason, a better test of obedience than if the interdicted deed had been in itself wrong. That we stop not to enlarge upon, as it belongs to philosophy rather than to exposition. The one act of disobedience borrowed nothing from the after life of the first man. It introduced all the evils that followed. It accounts for all the death that has come, or will come upon men.

The other marginal reading is, "even so by one righteousness." Is this one righteousness a single act *as the offence was*? Or does it include several acts?

If it were "by one righteous act," as we think, that act can be nothing else but Christ's voluntary surrender of Himself to death, which is the procuring cause of all good to men. It is true that in the life of Jesus there were many righteous actions. Indeed, there was nothing wrong. His entire behaviour consisted of right deeds, which, viewed as a total, might be called "one righteousness," preserved intact from His birth to the cross, and culminating there in His death. His death was the sacrifice by which He brought in an everlasting righteousness. All the redeeming value lies in His death. We do not attach expiatory virtue to blameless living. His conformity to the precepts of the moral law and to the ceremonial appointments of the Mosaic institute was necessary and becoming. It was more. It was noble and unexampled. There had been no life so pure, exact, and square to the law. Yet it was due. It became Him to fulfil all righteousness. "Made under the law," as He was, conformity to it was required on His own account. If His obedience is to avail for a guilty world, it must be His obedience unto death, His obedience in dying. By that one act God's righteous servant justifies many. By His *one* offering He perfects them that are sanctified. We yield to none in admiration of the beautifully perfect life of Jesus, not even to those who deny the sacrificial character of His death, and are therefore obliged to compensate their error by glowing eulogies on His life. We join them in lauding His spotless character. But

we go beyond them, and look on Him as the spotless *Lamb*. His atoning death is our star of hope. He died unto sin *once*. By one righteous act the free gift came.

“Judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” This repeats what we have previously insisted upon in these discourses—that not for their numerous personal offences are men death-doomed, but for one offence of one man who was constituted their federal head. Moreover, that one offence was done early in his life, before any of those he stood for had actual existence. Being all born after his fall, not one escapes the consequence. They were born to die. Had the period of probation been extended, and the fatal fault committed after the birth of Cain and Abel and Seth, there might have been a difference between them and his other sons and daughters later born. As the offence fore-ran generation, the moral condition of his family was uniform. The sentence forestalled the whole race. It was upon all men or *to* all men, as it is in the twelfth verse, “death passed upon (or *to*) all men.” So the latter part of this verse may be read, “the free gift came *to* all men unto justification of life.” But we build no doctrine on this particle.

“All men,” occurring in the first part of this verse, relative to the condemnation, is repeated in the second concerning the justification. It is a singular circumstance that in the fifteenth verse, the phrase “all men” is preferred, if indeed it is a preference, and purposely so expressed. It is felt to be a difficulty, that between

the sentence of death coming upon all men to condemnation, and the free gift coming upon all to justification, there is a notable difference. In point of fact, the two sides of the case seem unequal. Death, or condemnation to death, passed upon all men. This side of the parallel is clear. Before men had existence, personal behaviour could do nothing to help or hinder the sentence. The condemnation, so far as temporal death was concerned, could not be set aside even by good conduct when they came to exist and act. So we must take "all men" in its unqualified sense, and draw the line its full length. The difficulty is felt when we attempt to draw the parallel line, and make it co-extensive with that of condemnation. Unless we could believe in universal salvation, which is counter to the whole scope of Scripture, we cannot make the second line reach as far as the first, except by qualifying remarks. Up to the number of persons actually saved and installed in final happiness, the line runs equal, broad, and clear. If we draw it out the full length, the remainder from that point runs fine and asks for explanation. We do not accept of certain explanations that have been given of it, as referring in the second member of the verse to elect men, or as meaning "men of all descriptions, young or old, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, learned or unlearned."¹ Nor does it satisfy us to say, "all connected with" Adam "are condemned, all connected with" Christ "have the

1) Brown.

justification of life."¹ Recognizing the persons to be the same in one case as in the other, we think the difficulty is met by saying that the free gift comes upon all "in the way of offer," or as it is learnedly expressed, *in posse* not *in esse*. In fact, the condemnation touches all. In gracious possibility the free gift is open to all. As the ground of condemnation was irrespective of personal conduct, so the ground of pardon is similarly laid and provided. Men's actual realization of it brings their moral faculties into play. So much is done for them gratuitously, as to place them in a position where their own conduct will be the hinge of their happiness or misery. All men are condemned in Adam. All men are justifiable in Christ. That the justification comes not upon all in the way of actual enjoyment, is accounted for by the wilfulness of individuals who will not "receive" it. Many are justified, and the rest might have been or may be.

"Justification of life" is such a justification as results in life. If royal prerogative be exercised on behalf of a criminal condemned to die, he is pardoned to life. Or, if the trial of a culprit under charge of a capital offence ends in his favour, and he is honourably acquitted, he is justified to life. Accordingly he lives a while longer, a few years or many, but has to die after all on another account in which he had no personal blame. Justification of life entitles believers to a happy death, with the penal element extracted, and

(1) Hodge.

a glorious life of happiness afterwards never to end. This life is begun on earth and perfected in heaven. It commences when we are justified. "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."¹

The nineteenth verse is little more than a repeat of the eighteenth. The terms are different though in line with others occurring earlier in the argument. Disobedience is a new word; sin, offence, and transgression having been previously in use. Obedience as its correlative, is consequently new. These terms deserve attention. Disobedience is a swerving from spoken orders. According to the composition of the word (*parakoe*) it imports "hearing amiss, unwillingness to hear." Without doubt the first man heard 'aright,' and understood the prohibition on which so much depended. He heard willingly, his heart consenting, and his intellective faculty apprehending the purport of the mandate. Afterward he acted as if his ear had been offended. He stepped *aside* as if displeased with the restriction imposed on him. It was *disobedience*, evil hearing, wrong, *beside* the mark. It was as if he had a rebellious ear. His posterity inherit the same unhearing and unheeding propensity. By his act they were made, that is, constituted, caused to be, and treated as sinners, suffering serious evils through him. To be "made sinners" is to be treated

(1) John v. 24.

as such either by personal desert or in consequence of another's misdemeanour, though in our case personal blame is not wanting. Bathsheba's speech to king David illustrates our remark. "Otherwise it shall come to pass when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers that I and my son Solomon *shall be counted offenders* (margin *sinners*)."¹ A similar expression is applied to our faultless Substitute, who by divine arrangement was dealt with as sinful on our account. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."² The explanation we adhere to is, that by a divine constitution Adam's sin is visited upon the whole race, here called "the many."

The dependent clause of this verse names another person's obedience (*hypakoe*)—hearing in subjection, with conformity of disposition and action to the command. "The man Christ Jesus" received a command to expiate human sin. To that mandate He bent a willing ear. He took in its full meaning, and adhered to it firmly, as was foreshown by prophecy. "The Lord God hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting."³ As ready to execute as to hear the severe command, He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."⁴ Though He faced this death willingly, He

(1) *1 Kings* i. 21. (2) *2 Cor.* v. 21. (3) *Isa.* 1. 5, 6. (4) *Phil.* ii. 8.

felt it keenly, without daring defiance, or a spirit of triumph. "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."¹ We do not include His active obedience, for the reason before stated, that His conformity to moral rectitude was wanted on His own account, and could not be vicarious as His sufferings are.

"The many", made righteous, or justified by His sacrifice, though a very great number, is limited to the actual partakers of His grace. The rest of men are lost to the great account, through wilful obduracy, being self-excluded. Their final state rests upon their own choice in continuing what they were made. It was not fit that their last condition, which is to be perpetual, and is understood to be retributive, should be imposed on them by an act of arbitrary authority, irrespective of personal desert. Our sense of equity repudiates such a notion. A temporary representation whose consequences are exhausted within the scope of probation, leaving to individual choice the decision of our everlasting state, is as much as we can rationally plead for, or accept. The Scriptures teach nothing stronger; if they did, personal probation could have no place. It is our conviction, moreover, that the repre-

(1) Heb. v. 7, 8.

sentative system, which laid men open to injury from their captain, Adam, would not have been permitted to operate even in time, had there not been a purpose of a second representation, counteractive of the evils involved in the failure of the first. The "divine constitution," of which theologians speak, certainly combined both. Consistency cannot be secured without uniting them.

Then, if men were made sinners in Adam, and are made righteous in Christ, who *made* them so? God! In His sovereign pleasure He resolved on treating the children of men as legally liable to injury or benefit, on account of the two public persons named in this argument. This was decreed and appointed, but not without wisdom to counsel and love to prompt. According to "the counsel of His own will" men sustain loss in the one case and derive advantage in the other. Room is left for the formation of personal character, so that the established order binds representation and individual responsibility together. In virtue of this appointment, we were "made," accounted, regarded, treated as, sinners. By the same constitution we are eligible to be "made righteous." We derive this advantage through Christ, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,"¹ and who was "made a curse for us."² We insist most on the justifying notion of being "made righteous," because it is the prevailing item in

(1) 1 Cor. i. 30. (2) Gal. iii. 18.

the argument. Pardon is indispensable as a prerequisite to personal righteousness which is always its companion.

We close this exercise with a notice of the change of tense from the past to the future. Many *were made* sinners by the disobedient representative. By the obedient Sufferer many *shall be made* righteous. A similar difference between the present and the future occurs in another passage. "For as in Adam all *die*, even so in Christ *shall all be made* alive."¹ The stand-point of the writer, with so many centuries of history behind him, accounts, we presume, for his wording it so. The Fall was long past and was universal in its effects, decided to be so, even in regard to unborn generations. On the contrary, the number of the justified was a problem. It was to include a vast multitude in the future, who, and how many not being ascertained. "*Shall be made* righteous," was the only term eligible.

"Shall be made righteous"—when? Conclusively, and in the way of confirmation, at the judgment day, but incipiently and effectively, in the progress of time, when individuals repent and believe. So the "many" are being "made righteous," from day to day, as believers multiply.

Have you been made partakers of the benefit? If so, hold fast the beginning of your faith which hath great recompense of reward. If you have not yet

(1) 1 Cor. xv. 22.

believed to salvation, will ye now believe and enter in while the door of faith stands open ? The "many" will be one less or one more, by the withholding or the addition of your name. Which it shall be, we press you to decide now in your own favour.

DISCOURSE VII.

THE SUPER-ABOUNDING OF GRACE.

ROMANS V. 20, 21.

“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

THE first statement in this passage constitutes a hard saying, which we instinctively seek to qualify and soften. What follows mollifies the harshness and helps to reconcile our minds. It rather alarms us to be told that an evil already existing, and of great magnitude, has to be augmented by the introduction of a new power whose known tendency is to aggravate and intensify that evil. If it could be, we would prefer good without pre-existing evil as its shade or foil. As this cannot be for us, there is nothing left but to comfort ourselves with the thought of good coming out of evil. What perplexes us is, that the evil could not be dealt with at once and counteracted with an immediate remedy. The fall was the evil to be cured. The incarnation with its gracious accompaniments, was the proposed remedy; and it is effectual too.

But the two are not brought into such ready contact as our haste would dictate. A dispensation followed the fall at some distance, which, instead of reducing increased the evil. This economy was of divine appointment ; it was no man-made system ; God Himself arranged and constituted it, knowing that it would irritate and magnify the evil ; only He did so with an ulterior purpose that both the original evil and its incidental addition should issue in greater good than would otherwise have existed. This is a deep matter about which we behove to speak with cautious reverence. We will deal with the words in parcels.

“Moreover the law entered.” The “moreover” is the word commonly translated *but* or *and*. These words do not carry all the signification which “moreover” is capable of, which means besides, additional, further, something more than has been said, something over, moreover. *But* the law entered—we, however, accept the received rendering. It is as if Paul had said “To understand my argument thoroughly, you must add another item for consideration, namely the part which the law took in working out the result.” Higher up in the chapter two other things are said to have “entered.” “By one man sin entered into the world and death (entered) by sin.” Here are two terrible figures appearing upon the stage of human affairs, their entrance being encouraged and aided by one man, the only man then living, the seed-corn of mankind. He kept the door and could have barred out these two

impersonal but terrible enemies. Faithless to his trust, he opened the door, and sin and death entered. When Paul says "moreover the law entered," does he mean to put the law in company with sin and death? He may mean that they entered, and that it entered besides: without affirming this, it is note-worthy that the same term is woven into his argument before; the law was, of course, the Mosaic law.

Though the same term is used about sin and death, and the law, there is a peculiarity about it when applied to the law, which the translation fails to express, and which a mere English reader could not suspect. There is a difference in the original where no difference is made in the translation. Either we must have recourse to the lexicon, or place ourselves at the elbow of the learned to come at the real import. The verb "entered" is differently compounded here as compared with the same verb in the twelfth verse. The prefix *para* is added, which means "alongside of, beside." Accordingly the learned say that the law came in sideways, obliquely, as if it edged in clandestinely. It has been rendered, "but the law made a little entrance."¹ In this it differed from sin and death, for they made large entrance. Sin entered into the world, into all the world: death entered into the world, not by a small space, but by the entire breadth; it passed upon all men, covering the geographical world wherever habitable and extending down the ages of time. Sin

(1) Doddridge.

and death had universal empire, being confined to no nationality, economy, or area. They both had world-wide range from the first. Not so the law, it made a small entrance, it did not stretch over the whole globe, nor pass upon all men; it entered into the Jewish nation; the pagan empires were ignorant of it, and were not subject to it. It was the distinguishing privilege of one people. "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel."¹ "He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and *as for His judgments*, they have not known them."² As the law did not spread among the nations, so neither did it cover much time, it was late in being introduced; the world was concluded once and begun again, some time before it was heard of. It was of post-diluvian date. Several centuries rolled away after the flood before its voice was heard. We need not bewail the tardiness of its introduction. From what we know of its tendency and effect, we are sure that it would not have prevented the deluge. After it was brought in, it had no long continuance compared with the probable scope of time. It did not cover one third of the period of human history according to the received chronology, to say nothing of the course which the wheel of time may yet have to run. The law, as a dispensation, had a short career. The world was far into the third thousand of years before it was

(1) Psalm ciii. 7.

(2) Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20.

initiated. At the completion of four thousand it was verging towards its end, and was "ready to vanish away." Then came the Incarnation—the gospel economy, time's golden age, rich in its charter of blessings, "entered," and superseded the short-lived law. It has entered to abide and spread, till it blesses every region. Unlike the law it makes no small entrance, nor temporary stay. It has to be "preached in all the world," and be a blessing to men as long as the sun and moon endure.

Interpretations and renderings about the law's entrance, are rather plentiful—"the law came in between,"¹ "came in stealthily,"² "entered by-the-by or indirectly,"³ "supervened, came in the way of addition,"⁴ "came in besides,"⁵ "entered silently, or stole in."⁶ If we made choice out of these, we would discard those that indicate a noiseless and secret entrance as inconsistent with the facts of the case. The giving of the law was a very public affair—anything but secret or silent. It was inaugurated amid thunder and lightning, an assembled nation being the audience. If we were dissatisfied with the view above given about the law penetrating but a little way, and wished to adopt any other, our next preference would be "that the law supervened," or came in as an addition. It was added to the promises and the covenant of grace, then existing in shadowy embryo, and was a necessary addition to pave the way for the

(1) Wesley. (2) Bengel. (3) Bloomfield. (4) Stuart. (5) Alford. (6) Brown.

incarnation. The reader may turn up and read to advantage Gal. iii. 19—24.

Purpose or effect is expressed by the next parcel of words. "That the offence might abound." Taken in the fullest sense, the sense which they most obviously express, a meaning is suggested by these words that is repulsive to our feelings. Our minds revolt from the harsh idea that the Author of the law designed to increase the amount or aggravate the turpitude of sin. We have an intuitive notion that the law is against sin. Its avowed purpose is to check wrong-doing and promote order. When it is equitable and right, and well executed, can there be a doubt as to the happy effect? It ought to diminish offence as it plainly forbids it under the sanction of severe penalty. It should help obedience as it holds out to it a noble reward. In its own nature the law is adverse to sin. It in no sense favours it. Any occasion which sin may take from it to grow to greater head is incidental or casual, and foreign and antagonistic to its purpose. Yet the manner of expression makes this clause mean at the first blush that the design of the law was to increase sin.

Some very thoughtful and learned expositors adhere to the severest explanation, both on the ground of philology and philosophy. They maintain that that (*hina*) is always of *telic* import, expressive of design, a conclusion in which their scholarly brethren cannot all concur. As to the harshness involved in their ex-

planation, they obviate it by saying that the Lord pushed the law in to bring human wickedness to a head, just as a physician uses means to bring forward an imposthume, or a disease that must have a crisis before it can have cure. Sometimes things must be made worse before they can be made better. The aggravation of the disease makes way for the action of the remedy. The law had its day, not so extended as the gospel is likely to have, nor of equal length with the age when men were without law; but sufficiently long to try its efficacy and to prove its inadequacy. It answered its own purposes, though it could not make men good and happy. In the age of instinct when men walked by the light of their own eyes they strayed. They strayed quite as much under a law which marked out their course with rigorous exactness. The gospel is the world's only hope. Those who can receive this hard interpretation let them receive it.

Others take the clause by a softer handle. To them "that the offence might abound" means "so that the offence did abound." Such was the effect rather than the design. Nor is this the only instance in which the one is employed for the other. The law, when introduced, found men in a bad state. It did not make them bad. They were bad to begin with. But it could not make them better. Good as it was itself, it could not make them good. It appears it made them worse. It caused the offence to abound. More sin was committed after the law came in. Also the sin was more heinous

and of deeper turpitude. Extend the law so as to comprise ceremonial appointments and levitical rules, then, undoubtedly, more sin was committed. Things not sinful in themselves became sin when authority had once stamped them with its prohibitory mark. The multiplication of task-work tends to the increase of offence. Many an inadvertence and omission of mere ritual obligation rendered a Jew unclean, and troubled his conscience. The moral part of the Mosaic law had its effect in adding to the magnitude of sin. The more the path of duty is illuminated, the greater the fault becomes if it is departed from. It often happens that sinful desire gets a keener edge when it is hemmed in by restraints. Rioters have been known to grow more furious and unmanageable after the reading of the riot act. The unwelcome voice of the law is offensive to their ears, and sets their passions ablaze.

Paul's reasoning could not fail to be displeasing to Jewish Christians who would read or hear his argument. Enamoured as they were of the law, of which their nation was made the keeper and trustee, it would come athwart their predilections and prejudices to hear it depreciated. Their dear old law, which was their boast and glory, and which distinguished them from their pagan neighbours, still kept some hold of their affections after they had espoused the gospel. Though abolished and obsolete, they thought of it tenderly, as one thinks of a friend that has gone to the

grave. As a means of moral influence and an instrument of reformation, it had its day and its use; but it was evidently subordinate and inferior, since it has had to give place to something better.

The ulterior result is a pleasant theme. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Revisers say it "superabounded"—"did beyond measure abound." In the first part of the verse the offence is said to abound. In the second part the term is exchanged for a kindred word—sin; possibly a mere rhetorical variation. Grace, not righteousness, did much more abound. Mercy rose above human sin. To what height soever wickedness attained, mercy went up and surmounted it. To what depth soever sin sank men, mercy let down its golden chain to raise them; not only to raise them to the level whence they fell, but to higher dignities than they could have reached had they never sinned. Mercy is not accustomed to exactness in measure, but fills to overflow. Grace is bountiful and deals with a lavish hand. It abounded beyond measure "where" sin abounded—in the very same sphere. Within the area where sin luxuriated *there* did grace abound. Where did sin abound? Among the Jews, where the law had its seat, and developed its properties. According to historic testimony, the chosen people were no dwarfs in sin. Their laws were better than those of other nations. Their theology and religious ordinances were more in accord with truth and rectitude. Had their lives been holier

in proportion to their better knowledge and superior laws, they had been patterns indeed ! They were not better in proportion nor scarcely even in fact. " What then ? are we better than they ? No, in nowise ; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin."¹ Many of their kings were bad men, and showed ill example, which the people are ever prone to follow, as manners flow downwards. Their priests were profane. It is never well with a nation when its priests are immoral. Priestly corruption makes the people bad. " Like priest, like people." An unholy priesthood is also an effect as well as a cause. It is seldom that a bad people have a good priest, if the election is in their hands. So we may reverse the adage and say, " like people, like priest." Under royal influence and priestly corruption, it was no wonder that in the very metropolis of the holy land, the people did " worse than the heathen."² Yet how grace abounded towards them ! They were repeatedly pardoned their national iniquities and idolatries. And when the gospel age was opened, its first offers of mercy were made to them, agreeably to a divine rule that holds both in mercy and judgment—" To the Jew first and also to the Gentile." And those offers were largely accepted. The nation as such did not receive them, but individuals did, not only to the number of thousands, but to myriads,³ as the word is, " how many ten thousands of the Jews there are which believe."

(1) Rom. iii. 9. (2) 2 Chron. xxxiii. 9. (3) Acts xxi. 20.

In respect of individuals among the Jews, grace abounded. The gospel door was not closed against publicans and harlots. Nor did it oblige them to wait outside till the better seats were filled with characters less demoralized and degraded. The mission of Jesus was more than conservative. It was not only to take care of decent hopeful persons, but also to gather in outcasts, to seek lost sheep, to bring home prodigals, to pay heavy debts, and to pluck out of the fire, brands more than half burnt away. For coarse, revolting sin, we have no preference. Would that all sinners were sober, decent, well clothed and fed, and occupying commodious habitations ! At that point they would need mercy and be welcome to it. Yet mercy looks to a lower point, and lets its line down to others deeper sunk. It reaches a covetous Zaccheus, a demonized Magdalen, a persecuting Saul, who finds "the grace of our Lord" to be "exceeding abundant." Not only does grace abound in pardoning such characters, but in renewing and reforming them. Grace never leaves you as it finds you. It finds you guilty, but pardons you ; filthy, but cleanses you ; dark, but illuminates you ; depraved and froward, but corrects your erring tendencies, and makes you patterns of virtue.

Wherever sin abounds grace keeps in parallel. Mercy draws its line beyond sin in gracious overture and in actual remission when the offer is accepted. "Where sin abounded" was in the midst of the covenant people, for the law that enhanced it was in their

earthly. Wherever else it abounds in consequence of the advances of civilization, privilege, knowledge, and the sense that absolves responsibility, grace reaches thither also, and strives to take out the "crimson stain, and leave the soul as "white as snow."

Verse 21. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so, might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Paul's rhetoric shows a freedom in application of the same figure to different ideal factors. He changes his kings and his subjects at pleasure to suit his purpose. Twice before he puts the crown on the head of death and makes him royal. "Death reigned,"¹ being helped to the throne by sin. Now he transfers the sceptre to another hand, and says sin reigned, which also he repeats in the next chapter.² So also he makes grace reign here, whereas in the seventeenth verse he made the subjects of grace to reign.

An author³ who has written well, though not critically on this epistle, in treating this verse, loses sight of the personifications, and substitutes real persons—Satan instead of sin, and Jesus Christ in lieu of grace. This is not according to Paul, who, we judge, has a reason for ignoring Satan, as he never names him in the argument, and but once in the epistle, nearly at its close! We are loath to say that Satan has reigned. We know no place where such an expression is used. Yet he is called "the god of this world,"⁴ "the prince

(1) Verse 14, 17. (2) Verse 12. (3) Chalmers. (4) 2 Cor. iv. 4.

of this world,”¹ and “the power of death”² is ascribed to him. He had death-power before Christ died. His relations to it are altered now, at any rate, in respect of believers. He who died for us has the keys of hell and of death. “He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.”

“Sin reigned unto death,” or “in death.” If we follow the translation, the meaning is, sin reigned to the extent of producing death. If we take the revised reading, sin reigned in death, showing its authority and making itself felt by that means. The antithesis is that grace reigns, not *in* but *unto* life, a life not so nakedly described as death is, but called *eternal* life, whence it is argued that the death named in the preparatory clause must be eternal, to preserve the proper balance of the two clauses and the logical consequence inferred. If the death were only temporal, the reign of grace would not be “even so” as its reign, but quite otherwise.

The “righteousness” through which grace reigns is not our personal righteousness, not even that following our justification. Rather, it is our justification, or that method of forgiving sin brought in by the Gospel, and called “righteousness,” “the righteousness of God,” and “the righteousness of faith.” It is suggested by some to group together the words “righteousness unto eternal life,” and to read them—“justification unto eternal life,” like the similar phrase

(1) John xiv. 90. (2) Heb. ii. 14.

in the eighteenth verse, "unto justification of life." It is of no importance doctrinally considered. We prefer to abide by the arrangement we have given.

We close with mingled feelings our meditations on this difficult chapter; it requires more strength of intellect to understand than we dare boast we possess. We can grasp sufficient of it to show us that a mystery of evil is associated with our present existence, and to challenge our gratitude for the merciful interposition made in our favour. One question presses hard on us to which we cannot give a definite answer. The relative proportion of the saved and the lost—what will it be? Which side will preponderate, and how much? Will all be saved? No! Will many be saved? Yes! Will more be saved than lost? We trust many more. The question of *number* does not trouble the explanation of our text. It is not meant that grace would superabound sin in respect of the number to be saved. As all were fallen only the same number could be restored. Howbeit it will not be even so. No constitution of things could be framed to insure absolutely the salvation of every individual. Personal freedom must have scope, and lie open to the possibility of abuse. Meantime let us comfort ourselves with the hope, the basis of which we stop not to discuss, that a multitude past numbering "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues"¹ will bear palms and wear crowns, and sing the anthem of redemption. With-

(1) *Revelation vii. 9.*

out entangling your minds in speculations about others, look to your own condition and prospects. Jesus Christ has died for you, and is willing to save you. *Are you willing to be saved?* Will you let Him save you? Will you ask Him to save you? If you will not, how can you blame Him or reflect on Him about others, whom He waits to save. Obey His voice and be saved *now.*

DISCOURSE VIII.

CHECK TO ANTINOMIANISM.

ROMANS vi. 1-4.

“ What shall we say then ? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound ? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein ? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death ? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death : that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

ANTINOMIAN licence is the chief abuse which corrupt nature is in danger of falling into with Christian doctrine. Our Apostle foresaw that this would be in all time coming a main charge against the gospel, that its doctrine tended to loosen the bonds of moral obligation. To this point, therefore, he directs his pen, and by unanswerable logic forecloses objection on that ground. He shows not only that there is no door of warrant to sin opened by Christ's death, but, that on the contrary, the most powerful motivity is brought into play in favour of holiness. His object in this chapter is to prove the obligation which Christians are under to live righteously. He had already established the doc-

trinal position that we are justified, not on the ground of personal conduct, but through our suffering Mediator, whose atoning death the Father was pleased to accept in our favour. Now he takes pains to show that our obligation to holiness is not thereby nullified or weakened. The argument is even carried further, to prove that we are under more powerful incentives to orderly behaviour. We will follow his reasoning.

In the first verse he breaks out into questions. Interrogation is a common feature in his rhetoric. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? What shall we say then?" is his customary question at the turn of an argument. It is as if he had said, "What inference is it lawful and logical to deduce from the previous doctrine?" Is it right to infer that we may abide in sin that grace may become more illustrious—"That grace may *abound?*" The closing word in the verse is a repeat from chap. v. 20, where it had just been used in a strong and startling way: "Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound." But "where sin *abounded* grace did much more *abound.*" It is here brought out again as if from the mouth of an objector. If the more turpitude there is in an offence and the oftener it is repeated God's grace becomes magnified in proportion, may we not conclude that it is better to continue in sin, to sink deeper and furnish more instances, and so give occasion for the brighter display of mercy? He asks this question in order to repudiate and disavow

the inference with vehement abhorrence. In the early part of the third chapter the reader may see how he treats this idea. He comes over it here again with his favourite "let it not be," which our translators render, "God forbid." The divine name is not found in the original; but the expression in the translation being as strong a disclaimer as the English tongue can furnish, shows that the translators were considerate in so rendering it. It is deprecatory to a degree, indicating the mind's abhorrence of the idea in question. To continue in sin after we are made aware of its evil nature and direful result would be a violation of all propriety. From a Christian's stand-point the thought of continuing to commit sin is illogical and absurd, besides the moral monstrosity it involves. Shall we continue in sin after it has required the blood of Christ for its expiation? After the penalty is set aside at such a cost shall we continue in the practice? After we have wept over it and renounced it as the greatest enemy to our peace, continue in it? Shall we deliberately embrace it after we have put it away and pronounced it the sorest, saddest evil to ourselves, and the grossest wrong done against God? Or, take it from the stand-point of an unrenewed sinner, who has been informed of his evil plight and the means devised for his recovery. Why should he wish to continue in sin? Will the slave prefer to work in chains awhile longer that his emancipation may be more glorious by being delayed? Will the prisoner con-

tinue in prison a few more months or years to make his release more memorable? Will the captive exile remain away from his father-land where his kindred live, and his estate lies, just to set a finer edge on his patriotism? Or would you advise a drowning man to continue in the water and push the life-boat away till he was ready to sink for the last time, to make his rescue the more wonderful and thrilling in narrative? No! Let us be out of what is evil as soon as possible, and be wary not to get into it again. How do we act in other matters? The patient has no ambition to be at death's door before the physician is sent for. The criminal, lying under sentence of death, has no desire for a pardon to reach him only at the last moment, on the very point of execution. He would rather have it earlier. None of us wishes to continue in danger, in sickness, in poverty, in thraldom, longer than need be. Why, then, continue in sin when deliverance from it is proffered and urged, and an angel-hand is stretched out to lead us forth? Continue in a burning house, if you will, or in a sinking ship, or in a choking atmosphere, to the last moment compatible with your escape from it, that you may enjoy the idea of being delivered at the extremity; but do not continue in sin one hour longer; and, being delivered have no more to do with it. The memory of it is enough for him that is rescued, and that should be bitter and admonitory.

The relationship in which we stand to sin through

our connection with Christ is the writer's leading argument. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" Observe the opposing terms "we that are *dead* to sin," "how shall we *live* therein?" Can one be dead and yet alive? Or alive and yet dead, in the same sense? Especially, can this be the case within the sphere of moral matters which are so sharply defined, and so distinctive? There is something also note-worthy in the smaller words "dead to sin," and, "live therein." To live *in* a thing is a phrase of much significance, importing deep devotion or enthralment. To live *in* sin is no light or occasional contact with it. It is not the soil you catch by an unhappy brush against one who is defiled, and of which you may disabuse yourself by immediate pains-taking. The accidental step over the defining line within forbidden ground is one thing. The regular, wilful, persevering walk within that unlawful domain is another. Such we think to be the import of living in sin. Thorough devotement is the weight of the phrase, as when it is said, "and the whole world lieth *in* wickedness,"¹ as though immersed in it, or beset, bounded, and embraced by it. No individual can be in sympathy and commerce with sin, and at the same time be "dead" to it. Through union with a dying Saviour, believers become dead to sin, dead to its penalty, dead to its dominating power, dead to the love of it. We have no interest in it, and it has no

(1) 1 John v. 19.

business with us, nor any right in us from the moment of our union with Christ. That important point in our personal experience alters our position towards sin, as much as a person's death cancels his relationships to the living world. To be dead to sin obviously denotes an utter want of interest in it, as if it were a nonentity to you, or as if you yourself had ceased to be. The dead know not anything. They take no interest in the affairs of the living world. They have no rights among men. You cannot suppose them to be anxious or agitated about passing events. Are we then *dead* to sin? If so how can we have any lively feeling in its favour? How can we find breast-room for anything related to it, or bid good speed to any of the vagrants that come to us in its name? A Christian live in the practice of sin! You may as well show us a dead man who is alive. Can a dead citizen give a vote in an election, or a dead mechanic ply the tools of his handicraft, or a deceased lawyer plead a cause, or an entombed monarch receive tribute and perform the functions of government? The cemetery bears an air of quietude. Its inhabitants belong to the kingdom of silence. There is no commerce among them, no bargain-driving, no competition. Here are no courts of law, no offices, workshops, passions, plots, o intrigues. If we, as believers in Christ, be as little alive to sin as they are to mortal affairs, the sin we commit will lie in small compass. Then it is to be considered by what means we became dead to sin. It

was not easily done. We could not die to it by a simple volition on our own part. An act of mere will on the part of our Lawgiver could not meet the case either. There was to be a death *for* sin by one who was free of personal soil from it before there could be any dying *to* it on the part of those in whose behalf He died. Peter says it very impressively—"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness ; by whose stripes ye were healed."¹ Here we find both procuring cause and motive power. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind ; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin ; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God."² Thus ends the first argument founded on the believer's relation to sin through union with Christ, an argument which tinges what follows.

A new form of argument is drawn from *the ceremony of baptism*, verse 3. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death." We pass the challenging form of address, "Know ye not," which is so frequent in this author, and which behoves to be noticed by those desirous of knowing his rhetorical habits. It is in vain that some interpreters strike at outward baptism in their explanation of this place, and try to

(1) 1 Peter ii. 24. (2) 1 Peter iv. 1, 2.

strike it out. Because something deeper than the outward ceremony is indicated in the phrase, "baptized into Jesus Christ," it by no means follows that there is not a reference to water baptism. We have no wish to reduce the reference solely to what is material and outward; but we certainly think it is included and intended. The fact that a person has been baptized imposes on him the obligation of holy living, or in the style of this section living to God and dying to sin. Neither do we think that such obligation is confined to those who were baptized at a mature age. We plead for it as having hold of those also who are baptized at an age when they are incapable of taking an intelligent part in the ceremony. Amongst the Christians at Rome it is presumable were to be found both classes, at the time Paul wrote, as this epistle reached them many years after the gospel was first planted there. In the beginning of a new order of things, in which a new ceremony is introduced, both adults and infants come under it. When circumcision was initiated, both men and children were circumcised, the rule for it to be attended to in childhood coming into operation afterwards. So baptism of adults was a necessity in the beginning of the new dispensation, and is in nowise inconsistent with paedobaptism becoming the rule afterward. The words before us were written to a considerable number of believers who were baptized at a capable age. That ceremony in which they were volunteers was of the

nature of a profession. It was the public making of them. It was therefore a solemn bond, pledging them to war with sin and serve in the Christian host. They became soldiers of Christ. They were baptized "into" or "unto" Christ, which can import no less than that they pledged themselves to become one with Him, to imbibe His spirit, to adopt His practice, to accept His doctrine, to obey His law, and to share with Him for better or worse, as in a marriage. So ancient Israel were committed by baptism to all the requirements and conditions of the Mosaic economy. "And were all baptized *unto* Moses in the cloud and in the sea."¹ They were Moses' disciples, the spray from the sea, or the drops from the cloud, as with sacramental significance, consecrating and binding them to follow their Leader and Lawgiver. Christian baptism imposes equal obligation, connecting its subjects with Christ. It obliges us to receive His Spirit, and is of the nature of a promise or engagement that we shall have it. It is the picture of an inward work. The Spirit baptizes. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."² This is the very soul and kernel of baptism. To be pleased with its external and satisfied with it would make us like children playing with a pretty shell. Apprehend it by faith and realize it; abundant grace will be found with it, and solemn obligations therewith connected. "For

(1) 1 Cor. x. 2.

(2) 1 Cor. xii. 13.

as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.”¹ If it be asked, how is it with us then, if we were baptized when we were in arms, mere nurslings, and could take no voluntary or active part in the ceremony, not even our memory being able to recall it afterward? We reply, it does not relax the bond we lie under, any more than the fact of circumcision taking place on a Jew in infancy affects his obligations. Voluntary or involuntary, the bond is upon us. We are at liberty indeed to exercise our faculties and our will upon the matter, whether we will accept and endorse the obligation. But it is at our peril that we cut the cords or cast them from us. It is easy to say “our parents had no right to commit us to Christianity.” The proof might be more difficult than the statement. The system of generation and succession creates an heirship for good or evil which the heritors have to deal with as their judgment and interest may direct them. Our parents hand over to us their wealth, which we make no scruple to accept; their reputation, which we are proud of if it be good, and blush for if bad; their hereditary ailments and diseases, which we have to deal with the best way we can. And if we fall heirs to their religion we have little to complain of, if it be true and good. They had a right to promise that they would give us Christian education. They had a right to offer us at the font. And they did us a benefit. They did *their*

(1) Gal. iii. 27.

duty. Whether we will do *ours* is another question. As many as have been baptized at a capable time of life should act according to their engagement. Those who, on the contrary, were baptized at a tender age, are in our judgment committed by the bond, and are under obligation in riper life to sanction what was done, and act accordingly.

We linger a moment longer on this third verse : “ *Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death* ”—into the purpose of His death, and into the benefit of His death, which is included in the purpose. His death was for the good of believers, for their justification and sanctification. But it could only be so as it had a relation to sin, was a sacrifice for it, and a putting of it away. His death was intended to be the death of sin, the death of death, and the death of Satanic power in relation to all believers. As He died for sin, on account of it and for its abolition, they, freed from its penalty and power, should die from it, or, as it is said here, to it, in relation to it, which involves both the privileges they come into by His death, and the holy practice they come under obligation of. There is such a oneness between Christ and Christians that they are in with Him at every point. They suffer with Him, die with Him, rise with Him. If He dies to sin they cannot live to it. Where would be the community and conformity between the head and the members if they should live to that which He

died to, love what He hates, or hate what He loves?

The argument grows and strengthens as we proceed, its unity being still preserved. The fourth verse may be taken up now:—"Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Here is confirmation of the fellowship which believers, one and all, have with Christ. They die with Him, they are *buried with* Him. They are buried with Him by baptism; but it is a baptism of a given character, "a baptism into death." So the words should be grouped in our minds when we read—not, "we are buried with Him into death," but "by a baptism into death" we are buried with Him. Burial is named here, if for no graver reason, at least for rhetorical purpose, because a resurrection turns up in the after part of the verse. Raised up from the 'dead' naturally requires a previous burial. This language is confessedly critical. We hold it as used in a figurative and moral sense, not in a literal and physical sense. We are not anxious to prove that baptism, whether by immersion or affusion, resembles burial, which, by a stretch of fancy, might be done either way, though in either case it would require a stretch. Burial is an accompaniment, evidence, accident, and sequence of death. It comes next. "And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with

him.”¹ Dead and buried makes the matter complete. The funeral puts the death beyond dispute. The burial being added doubles and strengthens the position that a Christian has no more interest in sin after his connection with Christ. As soon may the inhabitants of the cemetery, who “dwell in dust,” be shaken and agitated with the passions and plots of the living world as a Christian have sympathy with sin. Let it be my endeavour as a Christian to live as separate from sin as a dead and buried man is uninterested in the concerns of the busy city in the suburbs of which he lies interred:—“That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Christians are alive and walking in superior style. Their being dead to sin is equal to active righteousness. In respect to God, they live. The drift of their life is to please Him. In serving the true interests of mankind they are alive. Christianity by no means cuts them off from human citizenship. It does not disqualify them for the offices of worldly business by beckoning them into cloisters and retired corners. In promoting domestic happiness, or social reform, or national greatness, they are active factors. Neither mutes nor cyphers, their voice is heard in the market, their hands are active in the workshop, their names are known on the exchange. The conversion they have experienced makes them better servants and masters,

(1) Rev. vi. 8.

better neighbours and citizens, and improves every relationship in which they stand to society. They live in newness of life, doing old duties from new motives, and doing a new sort of duties before neglected. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."¹

Christ's resurrection is made the type or model of the conversion of believers and their subsequent character: "like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." The next following clause, requires piecing out with a few words which are abruptly omitted by the writer according to his elliptical habit. Read in full it would be, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also *being raised up from the dead* should walk in newness of life." The life of Christ after His resurrection was nobler than that He lived before, as much nobler as incorruption is than a mortal body. By so much superior should the moral habits of converted persons be after their regeneration. The quality of their new life is typified, measured, and influenced by His resurrection. We mean more than that the one is an image of the other. The one affects and effects the other. "The power of His resurrection" passes into the souls of believers and appears in their general behaviour. We set down a few passages here which show a resemblance between

(1) 2 Cor. v. 17.

Christ's resurrection and believers' conversion ; and more than a resemblance, a vital connection by which the life of grace is sustained, and the life of glory anticipated, and in part already enjoyed. "Even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." ¹ "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation ; but is passed from death unto life." ² "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." ³ "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." ⁴

The agency by which the Saviour was raised again is expressed in the clause, "by the glory of the Father," which also operates in our new life both to produce and to sustain it. We understand the Father's glory to mean His power, or His power in bright display or open manifestation. There is, no doubt, an allusion to the ancient Shekinah, or glory-cloud, the symbol of

(1) Eph. iii. 5, 6. (2) John v. 24. (3) Col. ii. 12, 13. (4) Col. iii. 1-8.

the Divine Presence, which was an illuminated cloud. It is possible that that luminous appearance was present at our Lord's release from the tomb, as we know it appeared when the angels announced His birth,¹ and at the transfiguration,² and possibly at His baptism also, when the heavens were opened. We are clear in this, that power was manifested in His resurrection. The raising of the dead is always an outbreaking of Almightiness. Power in any way displayed is glory. "The heavens declare the glory of God"—they show His power. The miraculous change of water into wine is called a manifestation of glory, that is, power. Jesus expressed Himself in like manner in His dialogue with Martha concerning Lazarus: "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God."³ The glorious Father's glorious power was manifested when He released His Son from the well-guarded tomb of the rich man, surrounded by armed soldiery, whose hearts quailed to see their prisoner escape them. A power quite as glorious is at work when a soul is quickened from a death of sin to a life of grace. The change is uniformly represented as the effect of a Divine power: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."⁴ "For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."⁵ For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do

(1) Luke ii. 9. (2) Matt. xvii. 5. (3) John xi. 40.
(4) John iii. 6. (5) Rom. i. 16.

of His good pleasure.”¹ And it is spoken of in close connection with resurrection power, as if it were of the same quality: “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.”²

The sequel pursues the argument by other similitudes and terms. We halt here. It is obvious that, in the Apostle’s judgment, there is not only no just ground of encouragement to sin arising from his doctrine, but that rather there is the most efficacious and cogent motivity to purity of living. Let all who profess Christianity, therefore, be anxious to disprove the charge which perverse minds bring against it. And let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Furthermore, let all who wear the garb of religion test themselves by the rule here contended for. If they find themselves continuing in sin, desiring to continue in it, habitually yielding to its claims, and pleading for a low standard of morals, we advise them to do one of two things. Either let them give up the name of religion, which they are falsifying and disgracing; or, which would be much better, let them “repent and do the first works,” and get set on a right foundation. We can make allowances for temptation, and for an incompleteness in the work of personal sanctification, which in early Christian life is not equal to what it is after long discipline;

(1) Philip. ii. 18. (2) Eph. i. 19, 20.

but habitual, or even frequent sin, is an outrage on all propriety. And from *occasional* sin, even *very* occasional, good Lord, deliver us. Amen.

DISCOURSE IX.

ONENESS WITH CHRIST.

ROMANS vi. 5—10.

“ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also *in the likeness of His resurrection*: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.”

THE fifth verse is a repeat of the fourth with rhetorical variation. As there, resurrection follows burial, so here vegetative life is the proper sequence of planting or sowing. The seed or root buried in the earth springs from its humble bed, and shows signs of improved life. This is just another way of representing burial and resurrection, or death and life. The similitude is changed—the argument is preserved. If we have the benefit of Christ’s death so that it affects us for good in our legal interests and personal experience, there can be no reason why we should be barred the privilege of participation in the glory of

His resurrection. As we are represented in His subjection to death, we shall share in His triumph over death, and that not only at the last day when our bodies shall be endowed with immortality like His, but in the present state, by our souls being quickened into life by His Spirit.

Through the whole of the verses now under treatment, the idea to be preserved is, that *Christ and His people are one*. What He does is as if they did it, seeing it is done in their stead and on their behalf. If He suffers, they suffer; if He dies, they die. They are buried with Him, and with Him they are released and enlarged. They even ascend with Him into heaven and share His glory, as elsewhere argued, though not affirmed here. As He is, so are we in this world. And as He is, so shall we be in the next world. Yea, we have begun even in this world to be as He is in that. This benefiting fellowship is obtruded on our notice in the translation, by the free use of the words *with*, and *together*, which are but the same word. In the original this word is a prefix, joined to simple verbs, so as to compose but one word, and express one idea. This may be shown by the use of hyphens. Thus, we are crucified-with, buried-with, planted-with, and shall live-with Christ. It would be more correctly exhibited by reversing the position of the particle, though it would make less euphonious English, and read awkwardly—with-crucified, with-buried, with-planted, and shall with-live.

The translation is challenged and criticised and varied. The several renderings proposed, do no damage to the main idea, namely, the unity of Jesus and believers. As they rather enrich and strengthen it, we may forgive officious scholars for crowding their much learning on our attention. The confusing variety leaves us strong in the notion of inseparable union with our great Undertaker. Here are the renderings and paraphrases—"closely united with,"¹ "of like nature," "engendered together,"² "have become cognate,"³ "born together,"⁴ "fellow-plants," "intimately connected,"⁵ "made to grow together,"⁶ "grown together with Him into one plant."⁷ Being an infrequent word, its import is not so easily determined as that of terms in common use. It shows itself only here in the New Testament. The Septuagint uses it concerning a forest of oaks,⁸ a nest of trees planted together, being of the same nature, mingling their branches overhead, and intersecting each other at the roots. It is a brotherly idea. Like so many members of a family, of conservative dispositions, they embrace and support one another root and branch. Believers in Christ are so related to each other. Though separated in time and place and by other accidents, they are in vital union with one another by their common union with Jesus. They are planted together like a cluster of trees, their roots spreading in the same

(1) Bloomfield. (2) Cluverus quoted by Bengel. (3) Stuart. (4) Hodge.
(5) Barnes. (6) Doddridge. (7) Tract. Soc. Com. (8) Zech. xi. 2.

soil, intersecting and interlacing at many a point, the higher and stronger yielding shelter to the feebler. It should be the endeavour of Christians to realize and exhibit so engaging a spectacle. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."¹ Such is Christian life. Only in Christ can such life and love be sustained. Worldly compacts and friendships lack the cementing element, and are too capricious to be lasting. Religious principle is "rooted" "in love." But this is digression.

Keeping to sober exegesis, we find the thing to be spoken of is, not the loving union of believer with believer, but the unity of all saints and Christ. He and we are one in such a sense as that our interests and hopes, both for time and eternity, are bound up and secured in Him. If He dies for sin, it is as our substitute, for He had no personal sin. If He rises from the dead, it is to procure our enlargement. If He goes up and takes possession of heaven, it is as our "forerunner." Our being planted in the likeness of His death imports no less than that we are treated as if we had not sinned, or as if we had exhausted the penalty.

"If we have been planted,"—expresses no doubt, as the persons addressed are supposed to be in a Christian state, entitled to all the benefits of the Saviour's death. We may, therefore, pass the "if" as a mere logical hinge on which the argument turns

(1) Psalm cxxxiii. 1.

without indicating any uncertainty. It is the same as "we have been planted," since we have been planted, or, as we have been planted.

The leading proposition being admitted, the dependent clause easily follows, "we shall be also *in the likeness of His* resurrection." The germ-idea is union with Christ. That union has taken effect as concerns His death, and this is of supreme and vital consequence. But if in this instance it has been effective, it cannot fail in others. If we are "made conformable unto His death," we shall certainly "know the power of His resurrection." We shall quit the dust at the last day, because He shook off His grave-clothes on the third day morning. Our final triumph over death depends on the victory He achieved. His resurrection is causal, ours is consequential. "Thy dead men shall live, together with *My* dead body shall they arise."¹ "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in *Me*, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in *Me* shall never die."² "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."³ While glancing at that grand consummation, our text intends something less and nearer. There is a precious earnest given to the "children of the resurrection," namely, power to live a new life. This is a change equal to leaving the grave, and resuming our place in the living world.

(1) Isa. xxvi. 19. (2) John xi. 25, 26. (3) 1 Thess. iv. 14.

In exchanging a course of sin for a career of virtue we pass "from death unto life." The reformed prodigal was received by his father as one restored from the tomb. "This my son was dead and is alive again."¹ The natural man carries about a dead soul in a living body. Until grace takes effect on him, his heart is corrupt, and his life a waste and a failure, if not worse. Till the living Spirit breathes on him he is less than himself. Then like the Eastern despot, long degraded and bestialized, he comes to himself, and realizes royal manhood.² Such were we. "But God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."³

The word "shall be," is in respect of time, contrasted with "have been planted." It might convey the notion that fellowship with Christ's death is realized and past, and still continuing, whereas our share in His resurrection awaits the arrival of its proper season. In point of fact the one is as truly present, though not so fully realized, as the other. It is the form of the argument, together with the broader fulfilment of the resurrection hereafter, which throws this second part into the future tense. We are even now "risen with Christ," though richer life is in reversion. "We shall be," is thought by some expressive of obligation, as an equivalent to "we ought to be." This "ought to be" is so well enforced in the

(1) Luke xv. 24. (2) Dan. iv. 33, 34. (3) Eph. ii. 4, 5.

context, that the subject can spare it in this instance. It seems much more like the expression of a high privilege or a precious promise.

The sixth verse is united with the fifth by a participial link which shows a close connection. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." We know this. It is an acknowledged principle, that we are released from the penalty of sin in order to shake off its power, and discontinue its servitude. We are accounted to have died with Christ only on the condition that we live with Him. It is doubted whether being crucified with Him signifies the radical change effected in our conversion, by which we die to sin and live to righteousness, or points only to our relative state. We venture to leap the difficulty and combine both views. The legal benefit of Christ's death is so interwoven with the change made in our personal character, that it is often difficult to say where the first is spoken of exclusively, especially, as here, where personal holiness is the subject of argument.

Our "old man" is our sinful nature inherited from our parents directly, but remotely from our ancestral head. The first man conveyed this to us all by natural generation. So in rhetorical figure and in common parlance we speak of our innate evil as the "old Adam." There is something odious in the idea of an old man, bad from birth, growing worse as he advances

in life, till he reaches the stage of wrinkles and deformity, and appears an object of dislike to all who know him. Paul's portrait of him is more fully drawn in another part of his writings. He has bad *habits* which are not so easily thrown aside as common garments are. And even when the foul externals are cast off, greater vileness appears in the inward parts, so that nothing short of a complete change of the inner nature will render him comely. The full length portrait can be seen by turning to the letter to the Colossians.¹ Taking the figure there presented of putting off unseemly raiment, it is not so easy parting with long worn habits of mind and manners, as it is to strip off a faded and antiquated dress, for one of better *materia* and improved fashion. To part with sin costs us sighs and groans, and pangs and tears. There is a revolution in our views and feelings, the mind being disturbed with much self-loathing and displacency. It is well said, "our old man is crucified." We grow to be so disgusted with the body of sin that we consent to have it executed, that we may no more be subject to its enslaving rule. It goes hard with us to crucify the old man, he is of such close kin to us. He is *our* old man. It is as if ourselves were crucified. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."² We are no Christians if we are not willing to say amen to the old man's death. Crucify him, crucify him!

(1) Col. iii. 5—9. (2) Gal. v. 24.

"out the body of an" that is an *object* "might be destroyed" — annihilated some say. The word will not warrant so much import. Commanded as it is of a depriving prefix and of a verb that means *work* it necessarily conveys the idea of a *deprivation* of energy. So the scholars have authority for explaining it "might be rendered powerless," "might be annihilated," "might be deprived of its efficiency," "might be enervated." It is thrown idle, loses its working power, either to condemn in the court or to command in the field. It is master no longer, and it will be our fault if it ever regain its supremacy. The expressed purpose is, "that henceforth we should not serve sin," that we never should any more serve it. "Henceforth" takes in the whole scope of our life. Once our stand is taken to serve God, we are in honest purpose done with sin. Our term is expired in the service we renounced. The new service we enter upon is intended to be life-long and more, to include the *eternal*. As the Syrian field-marshal included the *eternal* in his prayer when he said, "I renounce all gods when I am in battle; but when I pray thee, be exalted, O Lord, above all the gods of earth? when I am in battle, I will not offer burnt-offerings to any gods but unto the

"...and I am a dead man dead from sin," — *dead* — *dead* — *dead* — which is applica-



cation to sacred things requires to be received with care. It cannot be received as referring to a man's entire relationships both to this world and the next. It relates only to this world. A dead man is beyond the reach of his employers or creditors, or any person that had claims on him in life. His obligations are virtually cancelled. He cannot be sued at court for debt, nor called upon to complete a deficiency of service, nor summoned to bear arms in defence of his country. He has fought his last battle. The debt of nature, so called, being paid, bars out all other claimants.

To understand Paul's use of this proverb we must fill up an ellipsis, as we often require to do in reading his writings. The context either before or after will yield a supply. We may supplement from the second verse thus, "He that is dead (to sin) is freed from sin." Or we may gather from the eighth verse thus, "He that is dead (with Christ) is freed from sin." He is justified, which is more than being merely freed. Freedom might be obtained by violence or wrong, by clandestine flight or by natural death, leaving much debt unpaid and many injuries unrepaired. The Christian believer is not freed by evasion of the law, or by any slip-claim accident. He is free like one who has filled up the measure of his service, and met all the demands of the law. If he has not done it in person he knows who has done it for him, and rejoices in his Surety. "He that is dead with Christ is justified from sin,"—

has received an honourable pardon for all his past offences.

The eighth and ninth verses are joined together like the fifth and sixth, by a participle. The golden thread of doctrine propounded in beginning this discourse runs clearly through them. The representative and the represented are one in interest. As His death was accounted theirs, so their life is, and shall be as His. The more elevated the captain is, the more glorious the condition of those whom He heads and leads. Conformed to Him, they have a long and lofty life in prospect. They shall "live with Him" *where* He lives. "Where I am there shall also my servant be."¹ "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me."² They shall live *while* He lives. "Death hath no more dominion over Him." There is some reason for the learned "Indicator's" remark on this. "Paul was unwilling to say here—reigneth."³

Earlier he speaks of death reigning, of the extent of his reign, and how he came by his royalty.⁴ But then he had in view only common men. Now that death and Christ are brought together it suffices to say that death *lords* it over Him no more. And that is much to say, for death had but the shadow of lordship over Him, and for a brief space. He was not dragged into death's dominions like a conquered

(1) John xii. 26. (2) John xvii. 24. (3) Bengel. (4) Rom. v. 14, 17.

captive. Walking deliberately within his borders He offered Himself to be bound, that He might show His power in effecting His own release and ours. On the morning of the third day He burst open the gates of darkness. King Death won no honours from his illustrious captive. He was even obliged to part with his keys to Him on His departure. "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of Death."¹ Some that escaped the dark territory were recaptured, and fell a second time under the power of the grim tyrant, as the Shunammite's son, and he of Zarephath, and he of Nain, and he of Bethany. Death had dominion over them. They stooped under his touch again. Not so our immortal Head. He dieth no more. Here is our guarantee for eternal life.

Ver. 10. "For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." "In that He died" imports, "as to His death" or "as respects His death." So in the balancing clause "in that He liveth," the meaning is "as to His life," or "as respects His life." The first statement involves two items. He died *unto sin*—and He died unto sin *once*. He died unto sin—how? We are said to die unto sin, when the love of it is purged from our hearts, and we cease to practice it in our lives. If after long commerce and fellowship with it, we renounce it and reform our lives, we are said to be dead unto sin. For

(1) Rev. i. 18.

us this is a very important sense of the expression. But in this sense our Lord could not die unto sin, as He was never in sympathy with it. He "knew no sin." It had "nothing in" Him. He could not die to, or cease to love, that which He never had loved, or lived to.

"He died unto sin"—*for, on account of, in relation to*, sin. In the current language of theology His death was concerning sin, to expiate it, make atonement for it, and take it away. We regard the expression as equivalent to some others involving the same doctrine. "Who gave Himself for (*peri*) our sins."¹ "Who was delivered for (*dia*) our offences."² "In due time Christ died for (*hyper*) the ungodly."³ He assumed human nature "to make reconciliation *for* the sins of the people," "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."⁴ His death was accepted instead of the penalty due to all men.

Another shade of meaning has been brought out of the words, which does not interfere with the sense we have given, but rather supposes it. "He died unto sin"—got done with it by dying. He had to do with it as a priest, and abolish it by sacrifice. It lay on Him as a heavy burden which He could only bear, and bear away, by suffering unto death. If He withdrew from His engagement as the substitute, the penalty would revert to the actual offenders. As He could not dis honour His bond, He suffered death, "the wages of

(1) Gal. i. 4. (2) Rom. iv. 25. (3) Rom. v. 6. (4) Heb. ii. 17, ix. 26.

sin," and so made an end. The payment of the wages supposes a settlement. He took the wages which we winced at, and could not face to receive, and so settled for us. Having died, He is done with sin. It has no further claim on Him, nor on those who are in Him. "No more to do with sin."¹ "The wages of sin being paid to Christ, there is no further reckoning between them."² If the reader can receive this let him receive it.

"He died unto sin *once*." This word puts honour on Christ's undertaking, indicating as it does the idea of thoroughness and permanent virtue. It means once completely. The lexicons give it once, once only, once for all. Wesley's text of the New Testament has it so—"He died to sin once *for all*." Not by instalments was our ransom paid, but the whole was paid at once. Not by many sacrifices but by one was the penalty of sin annulled. Nor was it by several priests offering on numerous altars that expiation was made. One altar, one offering, one priest sufficed. Jesus was all three in Himself; so full of virtue that no supplement was needed at any after time. Nothing could be added, just as you cannot add to infinite. To attempt another atonement would dishonour that already made, as it would imply defect or lack. The rush of ages cannot affect the enduring value of the one sacrifice, which spans the whole sweep of time, and reaches on to the great for ever. Its permanent efficacy is declared in

(1) Alford. (2) Chalmers.

several other places. “Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this He did *once*, when He offered up Himself”¹ “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in *once* into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.” “But now *once* in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” “So Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many.”² “By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once* for all.” “For by *one* offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”³ “For Christ also hath *once* suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”⁴

“But in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.” Something not expressed is understood in this clause. The first part of the verse has an extension of the predicate in the word “once,” which requires its counterpart. “For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth He liveth unto God,”—for ever. There is a sense in which He died unto God, as every good man dies. “For none of us liveth to himself: and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.”⁵ The death of Christ was unto sin, concern-

(1) Heb. vii. 27. (2) Heb. ix. 12, 26, 28. (3) Heb. x. 10, 14.

(4) 1 Pet. iii. 18. (5) Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

ing it, to check the mischief it was doing, but not to it as a person, as its personality is but a rhetorical figure. Jesus died to God, who prepared Him a body to devote as a sacrifice. "This commandment have I received of My Father."¹ He gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."²

"He liveth unto God" since His resurrection. It is not to be overlooked that He did so in His life of humiliation throughout. Always in harmony with the divine will, every action pointed in that direction. The Father's honour was the one grand aim never lost sight of. Released from the tomb in proof that His work was satisfactory, He entered on immortal life, and took possession of the mediatorial seat to exercise universal rule. "And He shall be a priest upon His throne."³ His life in heaven is priestly and royal, and in both respects subordinate to the Father's honour. Even the praise and adoration He receives have a higher reach. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father.*"⁴ This priestly royalty He holds from age to age, as was pictured by the king-priest of ancient time, who, it was feigned, never died, and never parted with his sacerdotal robe. The truth

(1) John x. 18. (2) Eph. v. 2. (3) Zech. vi. 13 (4) Philipp. ii. 9—11.

of this is in Jesus. "Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life."¹

The past triumphs and the present condition of our representative are rich in motive force. As He died to sin once for all to remove its penalty and break its power, how imperative is it upon us once for all to renounce the deadly thing which cost Him throes of agony, and sweat of blood, and sore amazement. As He lives unto God in heaven, what less shall we aim at on earth than to make God's glory our supreme end! "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen."²

(1) Heb. vii. 16. (2) Rom. xi. 36.

DISCOURSE X.

DEAD TO SIN.

ROMANS vi. 11, 12.

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."

THIS is addressed to Christians, as distinguishable from the unbelieving world. It cannot be said of the bulk of men that they are dead to sin, since they live and revel in it, and render it cheerful service. Whatever explanation we give to the expression "dead unto sin," it cannot be predicated of men generally. If we say it means justified, they are not in that condition, but abiding in condemnation. If we regard it as importing freedom from the love and ruling power of sin, it cannot bear application to them. They are alive to sin. As its factors and servants they show a willing diligence in complying with its dictates, and executing its behests. In contrast to them Christians are assumed to be dead to sin according to the second verse of this chapter. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" So when the Apostle bade the

Roman Christians make such an estimate of themselves, he pushed them to no false view, but only required of them a just appreciation of their high privilege, if indeed they were true to their Christian profession. What he incites them to, is the natural outcome of their Christian condition. The purity of life he urges, is the proper fruit and evidence of the principles they professed. Not to generalize too freely, let us ascertain, if we can, the import of the words in question.

“Dead unto sin” means both the particulars we have already intimated. It means released from penal obligation, or, as the margin of the seventh verse gives it, “justified.” A pardon at once generous and just, offered on God’s part, and on our part accepted, nullifies the legal consequence of our sin as effectually as if we were dead. Anything which a dead man owes you, may just as well be scored out of your books as settled. The stern arbitrator, Death, has adjusted the difference between you and him, and ordered you to strike out your claim, with an admonishing hint that ere long you shall be his companion in dust. “And it shall be as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower.”¹ We come to be dead to sin by the interposition of a substitute who died for us. His dying is as if it had been our dying. Though we are left alive, it is not unto sin that we are alive. To it we are the same as dead.

(1) Isa. xxiv. 2.

Neither is it by a poetic fiction or a mystic fancy that we are so. It is a real transaction, our justification being as certain and as honourable as the settlement of a full paid bill.

“Dead unto sin” expresses a change in our personal relations to it. We count a man dead to a thing in which he takes no interest, for which he has no liking, and the pursuit of which he has abandoned. To others it may have all the freshness of life, challenging time and attention, and engrossing the soul. But to him it is like a dead and buried object, or he is so to it. If then we are dead to sin, we have put it away from us, and turned the current of our affections in another direction. The Apostle expresses it strongly, more so perhaps than accords with the experience of many Christians. Yet this is how it ought to be. If we do not realize it thus, we are not in full Christian condition. We cannot be dead to the penalty, and alive to the practice, of sin. However sensible we may be of its presence around us, and of its taint and remnant within us, we are surely dead to its outward practice. Our sanctification has gone a small way if it have not shaken off our sinful habits. As we were once factors in the service of sin, and more or less skilful in it, there may be difficulty in effacing the memory of it, and losing all feeling concerning it. We cannot ignore it as if it had never been, or could never be again. As we are still on probation and warfare, it may become troublesome to us in the future,

notwithstanding our present mastery over it. Though we have forsaken and renounced it, there is at least, a possibility of our taking on with it again. This is implied in the strong language of the Apostle in arguing for purity of conduct, and in his earnest exhortations to this purpose.

“But alive unto God,” is in necessary antithesis to “dead unto sin.” We are in the one state just in proportion as we are in the other. The more dead we are to sin, the more the life of God prevails in us. The more of the Divine life we have, the more manifest is our death to sin. To be “alive unto God” is to be accepted of Him, to enjoy His favour, to love and serve Him, to be quick to hear His voice, and prompt to do His will. The appended clause, “through Jesus Christ our Lord,” which revisers prefer to render “in Christ Jesus,”¹ or “in Christ Jesus our Lord,”² may be understood as applying both to being dead unto sin and being alive unto God, or it may be restricted to that which is nearest to it. We think it best to include both. “In” is certainly a better rendering than “through” in this clause, as it is all but literal (*en*), and besides, believers are here looked upon as in union with Christ.

“RECKON ye also yourselves, &c.” As the translation is, the Roman Christians are bidden to regard themselves as in a condition of death to sin and life to God. It gives us the impression of a command, as we think

(1) Alford. (2) Doddridge.

of the imperative mood. Some prefer to understand it as in the indicative, which is easily exhibited by a slight transposition of the words—"Likewise ye also reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin." This turns it into a statement that they did so reckon or judge themselves. As the same form of the verb, in the second person plural, is, in Greek, common to both moods, the point in question is indeterminate, and translators are left to their own choice and judgment. We prefer the hortatory style, as if the writer urged his Christian readers to come to a right conclusion about their spiritual condition. We use the term conclusion as suitable to the sense. The verb here employed is sometimes rendered *conclude*. "Therefore we *conclude* that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."¹ This sense is given in the lexicon—"to conclude by reasoning, infer." Our word *logic* is nothing but the Greek word Anglicised, a word that plays an important part in Paul's writings. Besides being translated count and reckon, which is its primary sense, it is rendered to think, to conclude, to impute, to reason, to esteem. We quote instances—"Shall not his uncircumcision be *counted* for circumcision?"² "For we say that faith was *reckoned* to Abraham for righteousness."³ "For I *reckon* that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."⁴ "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood

(1) Rom. iii. 28. (2) Rom. ii. 26. (3) Rom. iv. 9. (4) Rom. viii. 18.

as a child, I *thought* (reckoned) as a child.”¹ “If any man trust to himself that he is Christ’s, let him of himself *think* (reckon) this again, that as he is Christ’s, even so are we Christ’s.”² We must not carry quotation to satiety. “Reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin” means consider, conclude, think, esteem or hold yourselves as being in that state.

Now, we may ask, how if they were not dead to sin and alive to God? How if he were telling them to reckon upon what their consciousness did not warrant? Would their thinking themselves in that high condition make them so? Faith is a powerful help. But it must have basis of fact, or promise, or probability, lacking which it would be mere fancy or self-delusion. You might tell me to reckon myself rich and titled and noble; but whilst I know myself to be only a common man, a mechanic’s son, would that aggrandize me? Or suppose I was consumed with wasting sickness, and worn to a shadow, would my condition be altered for the better, by thinking myself robust and healthy? Imagination and faith are powerful, no doubt, but they must be subject to reason. We cannot begin to build six feet higher than the ground. No man is entitled to hold his personal standing to be other than he has reason to know it is, or to expect it will shortly become. Tell a condemned criminal, under sentence, in a strong well guarded prison to think himself pardoned and free! He would gladly

(1) 1 Cor. xiii. 11. (2) 2 Cor. x. 7.

do so if he had reason for it. Not even recommended to mercy, and void of friends to approach the royal ear in his favour, he rationally counts himself but a dead man.

The persons addressed in the text were not in this sad plight, though they had committed deeds exposing them to capital punishment. They were told of a Saviour who died and rose again, and lived in heaven for them. On this broad foundation they were bidden to build. Though the basis consisted of facts, it was necessary to exhort them to confidence, since the facts could not be verified by their own senses, but had to be received on the testimony of credible witnesses. A kinsman of theirs, originally of nobler degree, who stooped to an alliance with their degraded family, cancelled their liabilities, and adjusted their relations with the Divine government. "He died unto sin once." Now "He liveth unto God." Their union with Him gives them a benefit both in His sin-death and God-life. The "likewise" and the "also" join Him and them together. The law dealt with Him in relation to you. The reckoning is met. Without ruining Himself he has raised you. He died and He lives. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Verse 12. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." Sin is personified as a master, or still higher, as a monarch, whose hold of men is most unwillingly

relaxed. The previous verse speaks of believers being dead to sin. It might be thought that therefore sin is dead to them. But no such thing is said. Sin is tenacious of life and hard to kill. It is difficult even to disable and dethrone. A good thing is done when sin is discrowned, and deprived of its ruling dignity. "Let not sin therefore *reign* in your mortal body." It may be dethroned, unsceptred, disrobed, and lose its power of command, and yet not utterly give up the ghost. Taking the actual experience of the bulk of Christians as giving the true theory of Christian life, you would be obliged to say that sin was rather unkinged than slain. Shorn of royalty he is, left without officers and retinue, reduced to common life and barely subsisting, but not dead. The actual experience of many Christians (we speak not of those who have attained to the "higher life") verifies the representation we find in old books of theology about the remnants of depravity, and the "remains" of sin. The illustration is drawn from the exterminating wars of Canaan, which proved to be not exterminating, though they were so far successful as to subdue and lay the surviving natives under tribute. Some of the sturdy Canaanites would dwell in that land though Israel ruled. Surely it is our privilege to bring our sinful propensities under. As several of them have been chased to the death and slain, we are entitled to pursue the rest to the same fate, and see the whole brood rooted out. This, which the text exhorts to, is

our lowest aim. Let not sin *reign, prevail, or act the king* over us. Why stop at uncrowning him, and breaking his sceptre? Should he have quarters within our territory at all? Should he remain any more than reign in us?

“Let not sin therefore reign in your *mortal body*,” may mean let not sin reign in *you*, as the body often stands for the whole man. It is scarcely to be thought of as distinct from our personality, of which it is the visible representative—“the outward man.” It is named here not because it is the seat of sin or its agent, but because it supplies sin with “instruments” as the word is in the next verse. The soul is the seat of sin. The appetencies of the body are, in themselves, quite innocent. Kept in subjection to the higher faculties, the body may be presented to God “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable.” The body is for the Lord. Yet it is a ready tool for sin, fits its hand, and becomes the occasion of much evil. So largely is moral action related to our physical constitution, that the final judgment is appointed “that every one may receive the things done in (or through) his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”¹ A mortal body, “dead because of sin,” is convenient for its purposes, and offers inlets and points of assault, which therefore require to be well guarded. As sin will have no place in us when “this mortal shall have put on immortality,” so now, in earnest of that sinless

(1) 2 Cor. v. 10.

state, let us deny it any harbour in our mortal body.

“That ye should obey it in the lusts thereof,” is capable of two interpretations. The first is, that ye should obey sin in *its* lusts. So Doddridge gives the sense in his translation of the text, “to obey it in its licentious desires.”¹ According to this rendering the man of sin has his lusts and appetites distinct from those of the body. The second interpretation is, that ye should obey it (sin) in the lusts thereof (of the body). This second view is preferable to the first. The appetites and desires of the body, when immoderately gratified, become the means of sin. Its love of ease makes us neglect active duty. Its natural craving for pleasant meat and drink ensnares us into intemperance, and abuse of God’s good creatures. Its baser desires spurn the limits with which the sanctities of social life and the domestic constitution hedge us round. In a word, the body rules the soul instead of being its servant. There is nothing more unseemly than for a menial to exercise authority. It is one of the four things which the earth “cannot bear,” and for which it is “disquieted.” “For a servant when he reigneth, and a fool when he is filled with meat.”² Aspiring underlings must be kept down by a wholesome “sharpness.” Indulgence makes them heady and insolent. “Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as

(1) *Family Expositor in loc.*

(2) *Prov. xxx. 22.*

strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”¹

We may use up the language of the text in self-plying questions. Are we dead, indeed, unto sin? Are we alive unto God? If we reckon ourselves so, are we right in our reckoning? Do our experience and conduct tally with our estimate? Has sin lost its charms, and are our feelings towards it changed from desire to disgust and revolt? We do not ask, are we ever tempted? We may be that, and still be right. Our Champion was tempted, yet without sin. If we are conscious of hatred to sin, and revulsion at temptation, we are different from what we were. In times past we sought rather than shunned occasions of going astray, and rejoiced to do evil. Let us bear in mind our holy vocation, and keep repeating our new reckoning. If now and again we find ourselves falling behind, let us bemoan our deficiency and quicken our speed. Leaning forward, let us say with Paul, “I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”²

(1) 1 Pet. ii. 11.

(2) Philipp. iii. 13, 14.

DISCOURSE XI.

SIN CONQUERED THROUGH GRACE.

ROMANS vi. 18—15.

“Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.”

THE first clause would read more smoothly transposed —“Neither yield ye your members unto sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness.” So it is in more formal parallel with the clause succeeding —“but yield yourselves unto God and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.” The exhortation begun in the twelfth verse not to allow sin to reign in the body is carried forward here into particular detail. We are urged there not to permit sin to make our body its seat and citadel. Now the exhortation descends to particulars, instructing us not to disgrace the members of the body by lending them to a base service. As the enemy must not have possession of the entire body, neither must *any* of its

limbs or organs, so “ fearfully and wonderfully made,” be placed at his disposal. The head must not think and plan for sin, nor the hand manufacture for it, nor the foot run its errands, nor the eye be its spy, nor the ear be its eavesdropper, nor the tongue its orator and advocate. None of our members to sin! The true language to hold towards it is, “ What have I to do with thee ?” Such corporeal powers as we are endowed with, are due to be consecrated to Him who constructed and formed them. The body is the holy place of the Most High, where He condescends to dwell. “ But He spake of the temple of His body.”¹ “ Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy ; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”²

“ Neither *yield* ye your members unto sin.” This verb is of extensive application, and ramifies into numerous meanings. Its popular sense is in harmony with the scope of the passage. We yield to a person when we give in to him, in argument or contest, and go over to his side, giving our sanction and suffrage to what he claims. In battle a soldier yields when opposed by an overpowering force. The odds being heavy against him, prudence dictates surrender, without subjecting him to the charge of cowardice. He yields the more readily if there is hope of generous terms. Without offer of quarter or pledge of mercy,

(1) John ii. 21.

(2) 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

he contends while he has power¹ to resist, and fights to the death. Surrender is followed by subjection and servitude. Tribute is imposed on the yielding party, or labour is demanded of him at the victor's will. "For of whom a man is overcome of the same is he brought in bondage."¹ It was an acknowledged principle in ancient warfare, that the vanquished should serve. The giant soldier who challenged the host of Israel, counselling them to spare blood, and decide the question at issue by single combat, quoted this well known rule. "Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me and kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him and kill him then shall ye be our servants and serve us."² Surrender is the forerunner of tribute and toil, and bonds and insult, and haughty treatment. There is much to be rendered after surrender. Yielding is a simple act and done in a moment, but the humiliating consequences are lasting. The demands of your victor may be painful and galling. If you yield to sin you have no prospect but to be subject to drudgery, and burdened with misery, and worn down by degrees to the end, for sin is in close league with death, to whose merciless hand he will consign you. Be this your watch-word in this warfare—no surrender!

It is not without warrant that we bring the military

(1) 2 Pet. ii. 19.

(2) 1 Sam. xvii. 8, 9.

notion into our illustration. Our author is no stranger to it in his writings. Besides the immediate context, the very clause we are handling, if we allow the marginal reading, suggests it, as also the last verse of this chapter hints it to a discerning reader. But now we follow another shade of import which the word bears.

“Neither *yield* ye your members unto sin.” “Neither *present* your members to sin,”¹ is the rendering some prefer. This is a new phase of thought, and warrants us to suppose an allusion to the altar, with its gifts and offerings. It is the very word used for this purpose in several places. Take a few examples. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye *present* your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”² “They brought Him to Jerusalem to *present* him to the Lord.”³ “My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct (*present*) my prayer unto Thee, and will look up.”⁴ It is sad to think that sinners are, many of them, devotees to sin. They make a present of themselves to the demon of evil, and are as diligent and devoted to him as the law requires us to be to God, serving with all their might and energy. They consecrate time and talent and soul and body to sin. But not so must Christians do.

(1) Wesley's Testament and Doddridge. (2) Rom. xii. 1.
(3) Luke ii. 22. (4) Psalm v. 8, Septuagint.

“Neither yield ye your *members*”—the limbs and organs of the body, and some say the various powers and capacities of the soul included, as if it also had parts adapted to different functions. There is a beautiful tenderness in the word philologically considered, implying a *care* on the part of each member for the common benefit. Concern, anxiety, solicitude, are at the very root of the term, though it is not required here to expand the thought. The most obvious members of the body are, the foot, the hand, the eye, the ear, the tongue; and if the mind have members, the understanding, imagination, will, and the several passions by which it is moved. These all have their peculiar and special offices in human conduct.

Sin can employ them “as *instruments* of unrighteousness.” The margin says *arms* or *weapons*, terms by which the very same word is frequently rendered in the received translation. “Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and *weapons*.¹ “For the *weapons* of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God.”² “By the *armour* of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.”³ “Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the *armour* of light.”⁴ In common speech as well as in the figurative language of Scripture the members of the body are represented in military style. The eye looks daggers and sends

(1) John xviii. 8. (2) 2 Cor. x. 4. (3) 2 Cor. vi. 7. (4) Rom. xiii. 12.

forth darts of fire, and the tongue “ speaketh like the piercings of a sword ” and utters cutting things. All the members can do valiant deeds of unrighteousness. The eye watches for opportunity, the foot runs to evil, the hand is put forth to iniquity, and the tongue is full of wicked wiles, and lies, and kindles fires of strife that set the wheel of nature ablaze. Such is their evil power that we are counselled to dismember ourselves and go to heaven mutilated rather than go full-membered to hell. But this is not to be understood in literal earnest, as there is another service in which all our faculties and powers can find worthy exercise.

“ But yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” The counterpart which this stands over against, is found by taking the twelfth verse and the first half of the thirteenth together, the “ mortal body ” representing the whole man, and the “ members ” particular parts. So here “ yourselves ” stands for the entire person ; then, the parts are repeated. Yield “ yourselves ” unto God. This is general and comprehensive. And yield your “ members.” This goes into detail. “ Yourselves ” means your whole being, body and soul, as an entire offering, nothing being reserved or withheld. Present all upon His altar. Then as He does not destroy your capability of action, but receives you as living sacrifices, living and to remain living, let it be your care to guard

against the misappropriation of any of the several members. He who has all must have every part.

“Yield yourselves unto God.” The learned¹ take notice of a difference between the word yield in this clause and the same word in that above. They are one and the same word. In the translation they are in one and the same tense. There is no inflexion to lead us to suspect a difference. In the original they are in two tenses. The variation affects the meaning. In the first clause the force of habit is recognized and the exhortation is to watch against its power so as not to slide back into the accustomed path. When you are bidden to yield yourselves to God, the reference is to one self-consecrating deed that makes you His for ever. It is a solemn presentation, perfectly voluntary on your part, though you are moved to it by His Spirit, and assisted by providential circumstances, and by helpful agencies appointed for that purpose. You do it with a will and an intention never to retract or repent of the deed. Once done, you wonder that you did not sooner do it. It is done once for all, not for a limited period as when a servant hires for a year or two, or seven, but permanently, indefinitely, as when one is espoused in life-long bonds. And this is even more. “I will betroth thee unto Me for ever.”² This is the meaning of yielding yourselves to God. It is no light thoughtless deed done with off-hand haste on one day to be disapproved and thought shame of the

(1) See Alford and Bengel.

(2) Hos. ii. 19.

next, but a well-considered solemn transaction intended to be lasting as eternity. "I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep Thy righteous judgments."¹ "Thy vows are upon me, O God : I will render praises unto Thee."² Though this yielding to God is done under gracious influences, it is not impossible to falter and slip afterward. Former habits may regain ascendancy, and temptation draw you into old courses. Your security lies in remembering the solemn deed of self-dedication and in prayer for the grace it guarantees. The exhortation in the clause, then, may be taken to mean live in the Spirit of that one grand dedication by which you pledged your service to God for ever.

Our altered relationship and condition should enable us to live better—"as those that are alive from the dead." Of course this means alive in a spiritual sense, including the pardon of sin which nullifies the sentence of death, and also that living grace which always accompanies pardon. What should hinder one so conditioned from serving God right cheerfully? He has sufficient motive. As a criminal whose forfeited life is generously spared by an exercise of royal prerogative, ought loyally to devote himself to the service of his sovereign,³ so a Christian who has received a pardon more than royal, divine, is bound to be zealous towards God. Not only has he the motive adequate to holy living, but inward power and gracious

(1) Psalm cxix. 106.

(2) Psalm lvi. 12.

disposition. A divine principle has been planted within him, which points and incites him in the right road. A new life has been kindled within his breast which is sustained by fresh bestowments from above.

“And (yield) your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” Our bodily powers find proper scope and exercise in God’s service. Though this service is pre-eminently spiritual, it is adapted to engage both body and mind. Our feet, and hands, and eyes, and ears, and especially our tongue, find place for action in the ordinances of the sanctuary, and besides are instruments of righteousness in our worldly vocation. Of all our members the one called our “glory,” takes the lead, and requires therefore to be specially sanctified and watched. The “little member” “which boasteth great things,” is consecrated in two ways, prudent restraint and judicious use. “Wherefore my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak.”¹ “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.”² How needful the prayer, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth ; keep the door of my lips !”³ The noblest use of the tongue is to honour God who bestowed the gift. “Therewith bless we God, even the Father.”⁴ It is an instrument of righteousness also when we speak to men to edification, our speech being seasoned with salt. And in both cases it is so “unto God,” to

(1) James i. 19. (2) James i. 26. (3) Psalm cxli. 8. (4) James iii. 9.

His glory and honour, as scholars call this the dative of advantage. We pass on to

Verse 14. "For sin shall not have dominion over you : for ye are not under the law but under grace." This, which wears the air of a promise, has been explained, we think mistakenly, as affirming *obligation*. The latter part of the verse determines it to be spoken as indicative of privilege rather than in the sense of prohibition. When obligation is intended, "should" or "ought" is customarily used, as in this chapter, "we also should walk in newness of life,"¹ "that henceforth we should not serve sin."² "My brethren, these things ought not so to be."³ It is true that commands and orders as well as promises are announced by the verb *shall*. "Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal." But these are given in the form of direct address in the second person, *thou* shalt not ; whereas this is in the third person. "Sin (it) shall not have dominion over you," shall not prevail against you. Though you are not free from its hateful presence and imperilling solicitations, be encouraged to resist it manfully, for you shall have grace to conquer. Though beset, assailed, and tempted, yet yield not ; for it is not your lawful lord that orders you, but only the voice of an old master from whose authority and rule you have been honourably freed. Under a new *regime* you can do better. Sin shall not have dominion over you to *condemn* you. "There is therefore now no condem-

(1) ver. 4.

(2) ver. 6.

(3) James iii. 10.

nation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."¹ Sin shall not have dominion over you to *command* and rule you. You shall have power not to sin—not to sin habitually and frequently, as heretofore, and if you realize the full enjoyment of your Christian charter, you shall have strength *not to sin at all*. Occasional slips in the struggle after higher life (which are to be carefully avoided, and penitently bewailed) are provided for in the covenant of grace. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins* of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."² As sins after conversion are contemplated in the provisions of grace, and pardon is renewable at several points, so that no one need go on sinning through hopelessness; so also there are promises of grace to mature and perfect our Christian character, that our obedience may attain to completeness, and that we may not make false steps, requiring pardon. We are born again at the same time when we are forgiven. It is against our new nature to retrace our bad old ways. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for

(1) Rom. viii. 1. (2) John ii. 1—4.

His seed remaineth in him : and he cannot sin because he is born of God"¹ —not that he has no capacity for sinning, or is in no hazard, but it lies against his principles and against his inclination. A strong moral likelihood is in favour of his not sinning. If he were to sin, as many believers have done, it would be in opposition to his better nature, under the strain of some powerful temptation. His reflections on his conduct would be in strong contrast with those of common sinners who sin and sin again without regret. The "Divine nature" of which believers are "partakers," gives power against sin. Infelicitous stumbles are not a Christian's normal condition. The inward circumcision determines the general bent of his soul. "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."² Personal vigilance, added to the grace which such a promise indicates, might surely suffice to preserve us even from slight and infrequent offences. "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

The reason given why sin cannot domineer over believers is added to the promise that it shall not. "For ye are not under the law, but under grace." As we do not find the article placed before the word law in the original text, it strikes us that the sense might be improved by its omission in the translation,

(1) 1 John iii. 9. (2) Deut. xxx. 6.

making it read—"for ye are not under law, but under grace." Then it would be of broader reference than to the Mosaic law, either in its moral or ceremonial department, comprehending law in general. "Ye are not under law"—ye are not under a legal economy which could justify you only after a life of faultless obedience, as under such a constitution one offence would suffice for your undoing. Ye are "under grace,"—under a system which, by the pardon it offers and bestows, provides against the condemnation that comes by sin, and against the further commission of sin by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and the motives which it brings to bear on the heart. To be under the law is no help, but, to persons already sinful, a positive hindrance, as it plunges them into more and deeper offences. It is a magnifier and a multiplier of sin, as is affirmed in the twentieth verse of the fifth chapter, and more fully argued in the seventh chapter. It is the law that makes sin strong both to condemn and enslave its violator. "The strength of sin is the law."¹ To be "under sin" is bad. To be "under the law" also, makes our chain heavier.

"Under grace" is a hopeful condition. It means to be pardoned, renewed and assisted by large promises and seasonable aids and engaging motives. Terror and harshness are overborne by the force of love and grace. "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto

(1) 1 Cor. xv. 56.

blackness, and darkness, and tempest.”¹ Mount Sinai gendereth to bondage. “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.”² Hope would be extinguished if we were under law, which provides no pardon for past offences, and holds forth no motives to operate kindly on us for the future. It chills us with its demands, and unnerves us by its threatenings. Stern and square as it is, it works largely on our fears, and nurses the hireling spirit. For creatures such as we are, something less rigid and exacting is wanted. This the gracious economy supplies. It melts down our stubbornness, unlocks our slumbering capacities for holy activity, and sweetly persuades us to obedience. It has a proper tendency to break the power of sin, and make us walk at liberty. “But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.” “Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”³

“Under grace” means to be under Christ. Before we get properly settled in the house of grace, there is what old divines call “a law-work,” of longer or shorter duration, in our experience. Sharp convictions of sin and painful discoveries of our helplessness to resist it, forerun our reception into the household of faith. Few persons shun the mistake of making a

(1) *Heb. xii. 18.*

(2) *Rom. viii. 15.*

(3) *Psalm cxxx. 4, 7, 8.*

trial of the law before they come to Christ. Legalism seems an inborn inclination of our nature. Repeated failures convince us at length, some sooner some later, that it will not do, and that there is nothing for us but to flee to sanctuary as persons pursued to death. Then we rush to the gate of mercy, which opens readily, "as of its own accord." From that gate none are turned back or delivered up to justice. Whipped by the law, by which we could not be justified, we find refuge in Jesus, and are freely pardoned. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."¹ Then when we find ourselves in safety, and lovingly treated, we give up our old habits of sin, being "ashamed" of them, and take kindly to the ways of the house we have entered. And yet we are not done with law entirely, as if we were free to live disorderly. We get power to live better. We come under a new law called "the law of faith,"² "the law of liberty,"³ "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."⁴ So then, though the verse in hand is anti-legal, it is not anti-nomian. The Apostle says elsewhere, "being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ."⁵

Ver. 15. "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." Allowing that we are not under a legal system, decisive of our final state, but are saved by grace, is there

(1) John viii. 36. (2) Rom. iii. 27. (3) Jas. ii. 12.
(4) Rom. viii. 2. (5) 1 Cor. ix. 21.

any room to take licence? Shall we sin, when we have come under grace on purpose to escape its power, as well as its penalty? Shall we sin—a thing we could not avoid doing under law, as it supplied no motive sufficient to restrain us, but rather provoked us to sin more? Shall we turn the grace of God to licentiousness, and defeat His purpose by returning to the abominable thing which His soul hates? His holiness forbids the thought. Gratitude cries out against so monstrous a perversion of mercy. And our own renewed nature adds its solemn amen to the writer's emphatic deprecation—"God forbid."

DISCOURSE XII.

THE BEST SERVICE.

ROMANS vi. 16—19.

“Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh; for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.”

“KNOW ye not,” is a question form, sufficiently frequent in the Pauline epistles to be reckoned characteristic, especially if considered in connection with the expression “know ye,” which is likewise of frequent occurrence, as is also the participial form of this same verb “knowing.” In the use of this question there is commonly implied a reflection on the ignorance or mental indifference of those to whom the author writes. It commends knowledge. It reprobates and deplores ignorance. Though insufficient of itself without being coupled with holy practice, knowledge is yet a good thing, and an ornament. The lack of it is a disgrace.

The more inert our speculative powers are, the nearer we approach the brute, an approximation we should feel to be our reproach. "Some have not the knowledge of God, I speak this to your shame." The sharp "know ye not," with which this verse begins, if not spoken to their shame, is at least intended to quicken them to the exercise of the knowing faculty on the particular question propounded. Passing this smaller matter we come to deal with the idea embodied in the question. It is this:—

Habitual practice is decisive of character; or this, Men must serve God or Satan; they cannot serve both. And they cannot escape serving one or the other. There is a choice between services. But there is no backing out of both. Many persons entertain the pleasing idea of self-rule and irresponsibility. It is their purpose to be their own master and their own god, and to set both the Almighty and the devil at defiance. They think they will just please themselves, and serve themselves, and have nothing to do with God in the way of responsibility, nor with Satan in the way of service. If this could be (though it cannot), they would find their condition but slightly improved. If they were a little better to themselves than the adversary of men would be, they would not be such good masters as their Lord and Maker is. Independence or unaccountability is not to be thought of. Every man is under divine rule, or under the rule of Satan. Those who think they

are doing their own pleasure are blindly led on by the god of this world. A necessity lies upon all, either to be subject to God or to Satan. To which of these men are subject is evinced by their actions. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."¹ "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey." There can be no just claim to the honours of religion without obedience to its precepts. Bearing the name and wearing the livery of Christ, it is not lawful to do the drudgery and toil of sin. This would be keeping up appearances in favour of one master, and doing substantial service to another. It would be compromising two rival houses and confounding the broad, abiding distinctions of right and wrong, false and true. This can no more be done than natural contraries can be reconciled. Fire and water cannot be married and keep house together. It shall be day and night at the same time and place, rather than a man shall be a sinner and a Christian at once.

To use up the words of our text as well as the idea —suppose two rival families opposed to each other beyond reconciliation. Would either of them endure a servant going between and spending considerable time and service in the other house? If a servant be true to his master, he will be seen day by day

(1) 1 John iii. 10.

within the walls or in the near neighbourhood of the house whose badge he wears. If with that dress on he be observed stealing into the premises of the adverse family, he will be marked for a traitor. He could only continue there and be actively employed, on the condition of having his coat pulled over his head and burnt, and putting on the proper family garb. If such a formality were neglected, and he were allowed to serve in his false livery, no sensible person who saw him about the house from day to day, and observed how nimbly he moved about at the master's bidding, could think anything else but that he was a servant out of uniform for some unaccountable reason. Should it come to pass that the head of the other family whose motto he wore on his back or his cap, came and ordered him to do something outside that house, while the master within commanded him to go on with his work inside, it would soon be seen whose servant he was. Obedience and not dress would decide the question. Our conduct, and not our clothes, determines our character. Whatever a man may say to the contrary, the person or thing he yields himself up to, is certainly his master. He cannot obey the behests and run the errands of a person and wait on him, and follow his footsteps like a dog at his heels, and receive pay for his work and then pretend that he is not his servant. With as little reason could he do service for one master and claim salary from another. Those who are in the

power of Satan cannot be in the pay of Christ. After the manner of men, our wages must be expected where our work is done.

The word rendered *yield* occurring other four times in the context, signifies consecration, presentation or devotement with a firmness of purpose to adhere to, and *stand by* a person. The hearty consent of the will is implied in it. It is not yielding, like a soldier overpowered by force, an idea which another passage conveys, "for of whom a man is overcome of the same is he brought in bondage."¹ It is rather yielding like a captive of love, attracted, delighted, satisfied, cheerfully devoting life and energy to the beloved object, as the perpetual servant whose ear was pinned to his master's door in token of lasting obedience. The freedom of the will is recognized. Personal choice is the high prerogative of man. He is indeed debased, and beset by powerful circumstances which bias him in the direction of evil. But there are counteracting circumstances, aids and motives, which put him in condition to escape the trammels of evil, and assert his manhood. It is put in his choice to forsake sin. His remaining under it is a matter of preference. When he has once been brought into circumstances to change masters and refuses to do so, the blame of continuing in a bad service lies upon him thenceforward. Adam's children are in a wrong condition first. For a longer or shorter time they serve the wrong master. Evil has the

(1) 2 Pet. ii. 19.

priority. But a hiring time comes, when they are left at their option to give their work to a new master. That happy crisis it is in their power to improve.

The two masters are expressed impersonally. They are principles, not persons. Usually we say that Christ and Satan are the masters between whom the world is divided. There is nothing said here about either of them. It is the same thing, nevertheless, as if they had been expressly named. Sin is the personification of Satan, and obedience stands for Christ. "Whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." Sin is one of the masters. He puts his servants to doing all manner of irregular and disorderly deeds. He gives them large commission to break laws, to do, mischief, to blow lights out, to break windows, to set property on fire, and to mar monuments that bear the image of rectitude. The work of sin is counter to the law. It has a hot spite against law, and seems quite cross to it. "Sin is the transgression of the law."¹ So it has a strong dislike to lights and windows which are unfriendly to its interests. "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."² The law brings sin into notice and under censure; hence sin's animosity, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin."³ The servants of sin have liberty to spoil all the lights they can, as a facility to their labours, which are works of darkness. Sin puts its

(1) 1 John iii. 4.

(2) John iii. 19.

(3) Rom. iii. 20.

devotees on filthy drudgery, as it is said below, "servants to uncleanness," and he works them to death. "Whether of sin unto *death*." This is the consequence, result, or recompense, for "the wages of sin is death." This is not the lure, or the offer, or the proximate consequence. Enjoyment, pleasure, or liberty is the bait which the tempted dupe of sin looks at and expects. While he snatches at the obvious and immediate object he finds the death-hook under it. *Obedience* is the other master, the thing being put for Him who claims it as His due from all intelligent creatures. Obedience, or He who claims it of us as His natural offspring, finds His servants plenty of agreeable employment. There is no need for them to go over to the opposite house for the sake of finding pleasant work. There is abundant scope for action within the sphere of obedience. He shows us what is good for ourselves, and towards Him and each other. Accordingly we have a convenient number of precepts to direct our activities. But besides these, there are several prohibitive instructions, which a course of sin is not checked with. It is the boast of Sin that he gives broad liberty, and indulges his servants to the extent of their hearts' desire, forbidding nothing. On the contrary, Obedience chalks out lines and defines limits, and obliges His servants to observe them, showing in numerous instances what they must *not* do. Prohibition enters largely into the sphere of obedience. "But of the tree of the knowledge

of good and evil thou *shalt not* eat, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou *shalt surely die.*"¹ "Thou *shalt not* kill; Thou *shalt not* commit adultery; Thou *shalt not* steal; Thou *shalt not* bear false witness against thy neighbour."² Touch *not*, taste *not*, handle *not*. Antinomian hearts, void of the spirit of obedience, kick at so many restraints and details as being irksome and troublesome, and against liberty. Yet such restraints are wholesome. The hedges are only placed where there is danger, to guard obedient ones from doing wrong. Those who do what is commanded and shun what is forbidden, find their account in the issue. "Whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto *righteousness.*" Why should this term come in here? The verbal antithesis is destroyed. After Paul had written, "whether of sin unto death," we might have expected him to write next, "or of obedience unto *life.*" But no; it is of obedience unto *righteousness.*" Will it do to say, "Righteousness tendeth to life?"³ Provided we spring the righteousness life will follow as a sure consequence. We are safe in explaining the righteousness as involving life, and a glorious life too, as the last verse of the fifth chapter gives the very antithesis we suggest: "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." We pass now to

Verso 17. "But God be thanked that ye were the

(1) Gen. ii. 17.

(2) **Exod. xx. 18—16.**

(3) **Prov. xi. 19.**

servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you," or *marg.*, whereunto ye were delivered.

It is a matter of admiration how naturally our author covers the dryness of logical propositions with the breath and life of godly emotion. In the midst of the closest logic, holy sentiment breaks forth. You hardly know which most to admire—his lively sensibilities, or his weighty, conclusive reasoning. This burst of thanks, "God be thanked," traces their conversion to its originating and efficient cause. It is an excellent reminder to the Roman Christians that they owed all to grace. Grace is the root-idea. "Grace be to God" would be the closer rendering, though it would be less familiar to our English ears. *Thanks* is a tropical liberty, gratitude being the return due for grace. It is a marked feature in Paul's character, that his gratitude is quite as often exercised for benefits bestowed on others as on account of favours conferred on himself. This is evidence of a benevolent mind. To be loud in thanks for what God has done for me, and my wife, and my children, and my friends, though right enough, is not broad. To overleap this narrow circle and exercise a generous gratitude for strangers, whose faces you never have seen, betokens a larger soul. Be thankful for your own mercies and for those of your friends and kindred. Do not conclude, however, that you have reached an uncommon pitch of grace when your heart has been exercised to

this extent. There is a wider field which your gratitude may range in. When you can appropriate other people's blessings who are related to you only by the common ties of nature or grace, then you stand abreast of the man who wrote this, "God be thanked."

What was it that caused this outburst of feeling? The conversion of these Roman Christians. They had been *slaves* of sin. The translation says servants, but "slaves" gives the true worth of the term, for servitude was with them less honourable than it is with us. From being slaves of sin, they had become children of grace. They had been children of disobedience; now they were become servants of righteousness. For this Paul is grateful. The wording is rather singular and abrupt. It wants rounding off with a little supply to make it read smoothly. Just as it stands it sounds as if he was thankful that they had been wicked. "God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin." Sin can never be a matter of gratitude. In every view that can be taken of it, it is an anomalous monster, hideous and frightful. Although the ulterior consequences of the fall be ever so glorious, our horror of sin must be none the less. We are aware of the line of reasoning by which it is attempted to soften the terrible fact of existing evil. We disavow any argument that may abate our revolt at sin. It is evil and only evil, and can never be an object of gratitude. If goodness overrules it, we thank that goodness. There are different ways of smoothing the Apostle's words

here. “But thanks be to God that whereas you were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart,” &c.¹ “God be thanked that *though* ye were the servants of sin, ye have now obeyed,” &c.² “But thanks be to God that ye were *once* servants of sin, but ye obeyed,” &c.³ Any of these ways is admissible. The remoter clause shows the matter of gratitude as being a contrast to what is named in the earlier clause. The verse is parallel to Eph. v. 8. “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.”

“Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” This part of the verse needs patient examination. It is very ideal. The form of doctrine or teaching may mean the leading articles of Christian belief, namely Christ, His incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and mediation, with other kindred topics thrown together in condensed form like a creed or catechism. It is reasonable to suppose that Christian truth was so *formulated* in early times. “An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the *form* of knowledge and of the truth in the law.”⁴ “Hold fast the *form* of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”⁵ Such a compend of Christian truth as we allude to may be found in another passage. “And without controversy

(1) Doddridge. (2) Bengel. (3) Alford. (4) Rom. ii. 20.
(5) 2 Tim. i. 13.

great is the mystery of godliness ; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”¹ Our crusades against catechisms, and creeds, and formulas of doctrine, have a spice of liberality in them and a show of free-thinking. But in casting off what we esteem trammels, we may be ruthless with many valuable things. . The form of doctrine has a strict relation to Christian practice. Doctrinal and practical truth are often distinguished from each other as if they were separate. This is a mistake. Our obligation to live an exemplary life is as much doctrinal as the teaching of the atonement, and the one is deducible from the other. The form of doctrine is not simply for the understanding, nor for the mind and the emotional sensibilities, conjointly. It is to guide our conduct. “ Ye have *obeyed* that form of doctrine.” We are bound to obey the truth, and to walk in the truth, as well as to believe it.

“ Ye have obeyed *from the heart.*” There is something cordial and kindling in religious duty. It is not a mere form or a lifeless ceremony, or a Sabbath decency, least of all is it an irksome drudgery. There is a life and sweetness in it to renewed hearts which obviates the revolt felt by carnal minds that conform to it from factitious motive. It is indeed a weariness and a grievous yoke to such as have unshapely shoul-

(1) 1 Tim. iii. 16.

ders. Such cannot draw in gospel harness. But let Christ be *formed* in men ; it puts their shoulders into conformity with His easy yoke, and makes duty facile and agreeable. In this respect the new service differs from the old. When men follow sin, and do its behests, it is often with the drawback of a condemning conscience. They know that they ought not to do it. They think within themselves that they will not continue in the service always. They mean to give sin the slip at some future opportunity. The bitterness of the service makes them loathe it and purpose a change. So Saul's retainers followed him "trembling."¹ Christians have their religion in their hearts, and their hearts in their religion. The love of Christ inspires them. They obey from the heart. The harness does not gall them.

The marginal reading inverts the textual order. "*Whereunto ye were delivered.*" According to the translation, the form of Christian teaching was delivered to them. According to the margin they were delivered to it. The result is much the same whichever way we read it. If they were delivered to it they became like it, and took the same shape, features, and outline. If it was delivered to them and they gave it cordial reception, and adapted themselves to it in spirit and character, the same end was gained. The marginal expression is preferred by scholars. It contains an allusion to the founder's art, by which liquified

(1) 1 Sam. xiii. 7.

metal being run into a mould comes out with all the features that were worked inside the frame. The founder is able of base metal to bring forth the figure of either angel or demon. We have only to think of the mould being traced with the lineaments of moral beauty and Christian character, and then suppose the members of the church at Rome to be melted, and in that liquid state run into the mould ; the result is sure, that each of them thenceforward will be a copy of Christ, more or less exact according to the accidents influencing the cast.

The leading figure in the text turns up again at verse 18. "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." The idea here is, *one master at once*. When we were the servants of sin, we kept to it and lost no time, and spent no energy in another direction. The 20th verse is the converse of this. It reads "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." Just so ; ye kept sacredly to sin when ye were its servants ; now when ye are free from it keep as sacredly to righteousness. The obligation to this is strong, proportionate to the means expended on our liberation. We were not made free by force. We were too weak to break our own bonds. And any one interfering in our favour could not do it by strength of hand. There were rights to be respected and claims to be adjusted before we could be honourably free. True it is that we owed nothing to our master, sin. We could be under no

bond to do wrong. We were held at a higher point —namely, the law. Through that violated law, sin held us. “The strength of sin is the law.” There lay the difficulty. There must be nothing clandestine. And we were not in a condition to give notice. A friend must come to our aid, and deal with the law for us. That friend was forthcoming to meet our account. It was a deep account and cost him dearly. “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”¹ This reckoning of blood having been satisfactorily settled, our redeeming Patron can free us from the hand of sin. Here is motive sufficient to engage us to His service for ever. Who would not say to Him, Lord Jesus, I am Thy servant ; I am Thy servant, Thou hast loosed my bonds. After we have known the truth, and the truth has made us free, shall not our steps be enlarged in the way of righteousness ? Shall we ever cherish the faintest desire to serve sin again ? By the precious price paid for our manumission, let us hate the very thought of sin. Erewhile we were free from righteousness, now we are free from sin ! Let us count it honour that we are servants of righteousness.

Verse 19.—“I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh.” This is said in the way of apology, and implies a reflection upon the persons written to. Some incapacity in them,

(1) 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

either of a moral character, or of intellectual weakness, affected his manner of writing, and gave quality to the terms he employed. Whatever may be meant by "the infirmity" of their "flesh" it bears rebuke and admonition. Take the expression as indicating nothing more than weakness in the understanding faculty (though it sometimes means moral impotence), it is no credit to them that they were adjudged such feeble thinkers, that similitudes unworthy of the subject had to be used for their accommodation. In saying this, he necessarily exalts himself somewhat, insinuating that but for consideration of their immature conceptions, he could have introduced loftier sentiments, and put a better finish on his composition. Thus it is to this day between public teachers and their hearers. The unadvanced state of his congregation obliges a minister to select rudimentary material and simple illustration, when his own riper ideas might be introduced, if there was a fair field for their reception. The poverty of many a discourse is chargeable on the audience. And it is as well for the teacher to intimate occasionally that his subject is capable of being put in a richer light, and in more noble aspects, even though such intimation involves a little reproach in it, because it will provoke thought and give a stimulus. If now and then he ascends a small flight above the common level, let not his hearers complain. By continual accommodation he would minister to the weakness which it is his office to cure. The admonisher of this

Roman Church brings a charge of degradation against his own representation of their conversion. He had pictured it as a change of masters, as passing out of one servitude into another. So they were servants before they were Christians, and on becoming Christians they were still servants. According to this view of it, they had not transcended their condition as servants. In what respect were they better? In this, that they had got a better master, and had worthier exercises, and the certain hope of better reward. Still, they were only servants. The writer was not satisfied with what he had penned. He could have found in his heart to cancel it, and write something better. But what could he substitute? The readers of his epistle would understand it; and if he attempted improvement, he would perhaps get beyond them, and not carry them as far as he wanted to go. So he concluded to let it alone as it was, but to write a line of apology, which, when done, involved them in a charge of dulness. "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh."—I have used a similitude which your acquaintance with social usages will enable you to understand, though I am by no means content with what I have written. It is clear that he thought he had degraded his theme by saying that his brethren had exchanged servitude for servitude. He wished to say something better for their new condition. He would rather have affirmed that they were in a state of chartered nobility, that

they were royally allied, of princely blood, and enjoyed the highest type of liberty. Why did he figure their case as lower than this? Evidently because he thought their attainments and notions were not abreast of it yet, though it was open to them, and to be aspired after. Let us endeavour to be something better than servants. Our vocation is loftier. Our Master said to His first disciples, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.”¹ Our condition is even higher than that of His friends. We are of the family of God. We are not above duty and toil, and industry, nor released from the wholesome precepts of law. We serve indeed, but it is as a son that serveth with his father, not upon the doggings of fear, but upon the drawings of love, not to procure reward, but to testify gratitude. Such, at least, is our privilege. If we mount not to this point, it must be accounted for by the “infirmity of” our “flesh” rather than by the genius and spirit of our religion, or the character of the economy we live under. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”² We are called unto liberty, which must not be used for an occasion to the flesh.

The recollection of our ardour and vigour in doing the work of sin, furnishes a powerful incentive to devotedness in religion. “For as ye have yielded

(1) John xv. 15.

(2) 2 Cor. iii. 17.

your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." It is beneficial to remember and review our past conduct, even though it awakens bitter emotions in our breasts. When it comes home to us how energetically we followed sin, it may serve to push us ahead in obedience to God's law. It were a shame to creep and loiter in the way of holiness, when we ran with speed in the old bad way. The doubling of the expression in both clauses denotes result and earnestness. "To iniquity unto iniquity"—"to righteousness unto holiness." In our unregenerate state we sinned and sinned, or sinned in order to sin. One sin was the prelude and provocative to another. Being renewed let us carry out the same action. Let us pray and pray, or pray in order to pray; do one good deed in order to another of the same sort, and repeat ourselves over the entire space of our probation. The downrolling stone increases momentum as it advances. Though the practice of rectitude be up-hill work, let us carry out the principle, and make one exercise in a good thing the stepping-stone to another of the same kind. Our "members" were servants—our tongues, our feet, our hands, were all active in wrong-doing. They are quite as capable of serving under the new regime. Our feet that bore us to the place of sinful mirth, to ball-room, theatre, or ale-bench, can carry us to the sanctuary. Our tongues erewhile devoted to profaneness or falsehood, must be

sacred to truth and wholesome utterances. Our hands must be quick and cunning to every good work, be lifted up in prayer, and stretched forth to the indigent. "Yield your members servants to righteousness." And let it be done in the ratio of your former activity. "Even *so now* yield your members." "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

DISCOURSE XIII.

THE SERVICE OF GOD AND OF SIN
CONTRASTED.

ROMANS vi. 20-22.

"For when ye were the servants of sin ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

THE writer having immediately before urged on those he addressed, as thorough a devotement to holiness as they had rendered to sin, pursues the idea in the twentieth verse, by stating that in their sinful state they made no account of righteousness. They lived wholly to sin, not heeding the claims of righteousness at all. They gave undivided attention to one master. Now he wishes them to live as entirely to God. There is no dependent clause following on to say this, but it is not needful if we take in what comes close before. Interpreters make this twentieth verse look forward to the twenty-second as its complement or contrast. Undoubtedly there is such a connection. Yet it looks back to the closing clause of the preceding verse. It

is as if he had said—Be as entirely consecrated in the new service as ye were in the old—be free from sin, “for when ye were the servants of sin ye were free from righteousness.” Right and wrong can never coalesce or harmonize. Like two rival houses contending for dominion, they cannot ignore each other, and each act as if the other party did not exist. Indifference cannot be maintained between them. “Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.”¹ In respect of sin and obedience, or Christ and Satan, there is no neutrality nor divided service. If any one attempts to wear the badge of both houses, he is justly suspected by both. As soon as he is discovered to be a time-server, both saints and sinners push at him, and oblige him to take a side and appear in his true colours. Of course those who fluctuate are always sinners. Saints are never two-sided. Those who unite the service of God and Baal are of the synagogue of Satan. The most of sinners are true to their profession and known by their decided adherence to their master. “For when ye were the servants of sin ye were *free from righteousness*.” One master at once, and serve him only—this is the idea. “Ye were *free from righteousness*”—marginal reading is, *to righteousness*. The translation conveys the sense indifferently well, though the margin is the more exact rendering.

(1) 2 Sam. iii. 1.

There is a peculiar dative case occurring here which requires a revision of the clause. "Ye were free in regard of righteousness."¹ "Ye were free in respect of righteousness."² It means that they lived regardless of right, and did wrong with readiness and aptitude, not troubling themselves with question or scruple as to the quality or tendency of their actions. Provided what they did or purposed was sinful, it was judged right and eligible to be executed inasmuch as they were the servants of sin. Their lives were squared by no rule of right, directed by no religious aim, and pointed to no worthy end. Righteousness was not their gauge of action, but will, or passion, or any other influence that chanced to sway them. Not that their deeds in form or substance were always grossly wrong; for it is scarcely possible for persons encompassed by social influences to outrage propriety to such a degree. Yet the good deeds of ungodly characters, read in their true light, are not entitled to be pronounced right, because they are performed without reference to the divine law.

"Ye were free from righteousness"—ye thought so at least, assuming a liberty to which you had no right. The law of God was as binding on you when you set it at nought, as it is now when you acknowledge its obligation. There is a sense in which the unregenerate are free from righteousness. They are free as a professional thief is free from honesty, as a drunkard

(1) Alford. (2) Stuart.

is free from sobriety, or a sluggard from industry. The freebooter who sets at defiance the laws of the land, and commits deeds of daring, trespass, and robbery, is free. The right to molest the public and rob the traveller is not conceded to him; but he is free from righteousness in the sense that neither the laws of the state, nor the dictates of his own conscience are sufficient to restrain him. The freedom of the servants of sin is self-assumed. Setting the authority of God and His Son at nought, they say, "Let us break Their bands assunder and cast away Their cords from us."¹ They count it pleasant to run wild, out of harness, without saddle or bridle or burden, and to live the life of a wild ass. All the while thinking themselves free, they are the dupes of passion, the drudges of sinful propensity, and under the tyranny of Satan. Such freedom is slavery indeed. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."² We understand this verse then to mean—as heretofore you acted in utter disregard of the law or requirements of righteousness, so henceforward be equally devoted to holiness, and render sin no service. There is reference backward to the nineteenth verse.

Verse 21. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." According to the punctuation of this verse, the question proposed, is impliedly though not expressly answered, by the force of the rhetoric.

(1) Psalm ii. 3.

(2) John viii. 34.

Another pointing is recommended by which the verse assumes the form of question and answer. The learned Dean so often quoted in these discourses on matters of criticism, prefers the amended construction, which places the sign of interrogation after the word *then*, and turns the following words into a reply. So he translates it—"What fruit had ye then at that time? Things whereof ye are now ashamed: for the end of those things is death." We presume not to decide which is the better disposition of the words. The received version is in our judgment the most easy and natural, and we accept it for that reason.

"Fruit," very generally means benefit, for which it is an appropriate and beautiful figure. After great cost and pains in planting and pruning, and fencing, and watching and watering, fruit is an object of desire. Its natural agreeableness is enhanced by the thought of previous toil and solicitude. We feel a sort of right in it, which without diminishing gratitude sharpens enjoyment. The fruit which we have contributed to produce by our personal attention and care is doubly sweet. "For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands, happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee."¹ The bread which a man earns by honest toil is due to his mouth by a right beyond dispute, and is dearer to him than heritage or gift. Adopting this sense of the word "fruit," we would have to answer the question by saying there was no fruit, that

(1) Psalm cxxviii. 2.

is, no benefit derived from sinful practices. Sin is an unprofitable device. It is labour without benefit, toiling in the fire for very vanity, beating the air. Who would embark in a business that throws the balance on the wrong side ? “ Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? ”¹ When the day-labourer toils through a term and reaches a point when payment is due and receives nothing, he naturally feels discouraged. If he repeats the process again and again, with the same result he must be infatuated and strangely in love with drudgery. “ What fruit had ye then in those things ? ” Be thankful, brethren, that your eyes were opened. Now that you have escaped such a barren service, carefully shun all further connection with it. “ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”² Taking fruit to signify benefit, the answer would be *we had none*. But this does not exhaust the meaning.

“ Fruit” means result, returns, consequence of action, whether good or bad. The bad effects of wickedness are fruit, as well as the good consequences of well-doing. The fruit of sin is bitter and evil, but it is its natural outcome. He who produces it is obliged to gather and eat it. Cause and effect are quite as hard to sever in the sphere of moral action as within the range of natural sequences. The causal coherence of

(1) Isa. iv. 2. (2) Eph. v. 11.

sin and misery is frequently indicated in the Scripture. “They would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the *fruit* of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”¹ “Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the *fruit* of their doings. Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him: for the *reward* of his hands shall be given him.”² “Hear O earth: behold I will bring evil upon this people, even the *fruit* of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My law, but rejected it.”³ “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”⁴ What do men think of? Will they cultivate the thorn in the hope of filling the wine-press with grapes? Will they sow thistle-down, and expect the sweet fig to crown the growth? “Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?”⁵ Nature will not so contradict herself. It is unreasonable men who are guilty of double dealing, expect good consequences from evil antecedents, and mix up good and evil so as to destroy the distinction. “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place

(1) Prov. i. 30, 31. (2) Isa. iii. 10, 11. (3) Jer. vi. 19.

(4) Gal. vi. 7, 8. (5) Matt. vii. 16.

sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.”¹ Evil action cannot have good consequence. “Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.”² Viewed in the sense of *benefit* there is no fruit in the things referred to. Viewed in the sense of *consequence* or *result* there is fruit agreeing in nature and measure to the producing cause. Bitter fruit it is, and deadly, “for the end of those things is death.” It seems improper to call death fruit, since it blasts and withers all that is good and hopeful. Life and verdure are necessary to fruit, and in nature always accompany it: but figures do not scruple at exactness. “When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth *fruit unto death.*”³ The full answer to the question before us is, no good fruit, but much bad fruit.

“What fruit had ye *then* in those things.” The “then” might be a period of greater or less distance from the time when they were thus addressed. If it was after a considerable time, sufficient for them to have gained experience in the ways of grace, they would be all the more competent to give an answer to this question. From the very first a Christian convert feels the happy difference between a life of sin and the service of God. But the contrast becomes broader as higher attainments are reached. At the first the fruits

(1) Jas. iii. 10—12.

(2) Job iv. 8.

(3) Rom. vii. 5.

of religion are limited, there not having been time sufficient for them to ripen. Let a few years transpire to give the subject of grace opportunity to ascertain what religion can do for him under the vicissitudes of life, he will be able to make a better estimate and to take a truer retrospect of his life of sin. The longer we are in the service of God, the more satisfied we become with it, and the more thankful we are that we entered it. Our chief regret then is, that we did not sooner yield ourselves to God.

“Whereof ye are now ashamed.” Conversion alters the complexion of our feelings in regard to moral actions. In their natural state men are not ashamed of sin. They would sooner feel shame if they were charged with being religious. Some, indeed, are proud of their exploits in wickedness, and glory in their shame. As long as they keep within the limits of decency, and commit only sins current in general society, they never entertain the thought of blushing. If they exceeded the common standard they might; but even those who do so grow bold proportionately. Shame for sin comes when the light of truth and grace enters our hearts. The odious aspect in which sin then appears breaks us from the love of it, and fills us with loathing and shame that we should ever have concerted with it or given it the hand. This feeling of shame for sin has reference chiefly to God. It is manifested in the penitence which initiates religious life, and afterwards in proportion to our pro-

gress in religious attainments. The closer we are in fellowship and favour with God, the more conscious shame we have respecting our past sins, even though they be pardoned, yea, and because they are pardoned. "And I will establish my covenant with thee ; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord : that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."¹ "Surely after that I was turned I repented ; and after that I was instructed I smote upon my thigh ; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth."² This feeling rises up in the breasts of the holiest men long after they have been taken into covenant with God. Saints are ashamed of their former sins also before men. They would gladly undo all their former life, and bury out of memory their misdeeds, if it were possible. They cannot speak of them lightly, nor think of them but with grief and abhorrence.

The habits of good men differ. Some scarcely ever name their former life, and when they do so, speak of their particular sins only, in a general way, avoiding detail. They sorely deplore their erring habits, and sincerely wish they had had no outward sins to mourn over. At the distance of many years their overt acts and secret faults are a painful memory, and if the laws of mind would allow it, would be wiped from the

(1) *Ezek. xvi. 62, 63.* (2) *Jer. xxxi. 19.*

inward tablet as fully as God has expunged them from His book. Some other good men talk more freely about their sins, giving them name, and dwelling upon circumstances of intensifying aggravation. We hope their motive aim is right—to abase themselves and exalt God's grace, and encourage others to abandon sinful courses. But it is critical ground to venture on. Care must always be taken to leave an impression that sin is hateful.

“For the end of those things is death.” The end—issue, event, or final consequence of wicked actions is death, death temporal, and besides, all that death stands for in scripture language, the misery that sin produces in a soul that has capacity of living for ever. The *way* of sin is bad, the *end* is worse. The fruits of sin in time are bitter; in eternity, they reach their consummation in a continuity of punishment fearful to think of. The end does not necessarily mean a cessation, but the final issue to which actions tend. In the case of approved characters the end is “everlasting life,” or happiness, as the after-mentioned contrast expresses. We have no authority to weaken the force of the term when applied to the final condition of obdurate sinners. The end will continue.

Ver. 22. “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” This is in antithetical contrast with the twentieth verse. The former slaves of sin appear here in a new condition,

in new livery, doing duty in a worthier service, which, as far as the wording is concerned, might be called a new slavery. They were slaves to sin, now they are slaves to God. The expression grates on our ears, as not being in harmony with the generous nature of our religion, which is liberty, "glorious liberty." But the original word really denotes slavery, and is more offensive to the ear than the translation is. Our notions of service are nobler than theirs were to whom this was written. Their servants were properly slaves. And this is the word applied here to Christians, "slaves to God." We would rather be slaves to Him than to any other power in the universe. He is absolute Sovereign, and has a right to rule and demand obedience of His creatures. Moreover, He is the best of beings, supremely good, free from caprice, or passion, or corrupting influence. His will is, in all cases, in line with rectitude. He only is fit to be a Despot, as He is sometimes called in the Scripture, though under the cover of a translation that hides the offensive word,¹ as there is in Him the true balance of power and goodness. Irresponsible authority is safe from abuse in His hands.

"Being made free from sin." The Apostle delights in repeating this. He has said it twice before. "Sin shall not have dominion over you," ver. 14. "Being then made free from sin," ver. 18. Here it comes up again in contrast. "Ye were free from righteousness,"

(1) Luke ii. 29, Gr.

“but now being made free from sin.” This is true liberty. Any other notion of it is delusive and false. Whilst men are the slaves of passion, and on its prompting do deeds that debase and degrade them, against the monitions of their higher faculties, it is in vain they boast political privileges and the rights of citizenship. The conquest of self is the true dignity. Till this is acquired men are but slaves, “the servants of corruption,”¹ “serving divers lusts and pleasures.”² From such vile vassalage believers are made free by Christ, by the truth and by the Spirit. The Anointed One was sent “to preach liberty to the captives,” and to loosen their bonds. “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”³ “And where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.”⁴

“Servants to God.” Compared with the contrast as given above, here is a difference, and an improvement. There it was “servants of sin” and “free from righteousness;” here it is “free from sin” and “servants to God.” Why not to righteousness as before? Because it suited the Apostle’s purpose to bring in a real person to whom the Christian’s services are rendered. To serve Him is honour indeed, as well as freedom. The glory of the master is reflected on the servants. Angels know no higher happiness than to serve God. In this the saints are equal to them. Even our glorified condition will be servitude. “And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God

(1) 2 Pet. ii. 19. (2) Tit. iii. 3. (3) John viii. 32. (4) 2 Cor. iii. 17.

and of the Lamb shall be in it ; and His servants shall serve Him.”¹

“Fruit unto holiness”—may mean holiness itself as the fruit yielded by those in God’s service. Nothing is more common than to represent His servants as the bearers of fruit, as producing it for the good of men and the divine glory. “Fruitful in every good work.”² “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”³ “Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.”⁴ “They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.”⁵ Or it may mean fruit (benefit) received and enjoyed. This would keep it in parallel with the twentieth verse, with which this is in contrast. We accepted advantage as the idea there. If we preserve uniformity, the meaning is, ye have advantages arising from the practice of holiness. This is a fact often stated in Scripture. It is even held out as an inducement to begin a new life, or a motive to persevere in it, if already begun. The rewards of holy living are great and numerous even in relation to the present life. Another interpretation is held, that the new service is subservient to holiness, as if the fruit would *lead unto* that result. True enough there is an elevating influence in the service enabling its devotees to cast off whatever is gross and low, and to rise to a high standard of sanctity. It increases to more holiness.

(1) Rev. xxii. 8. (2) Col. i. 10. (3) Philip. i. 11. (4) Isa. lxi. 8.
(5) Psalm xcii. 14.

DISCOURSE XV.

DEAD TO THE LAW.

ROMANS vii. 1-6.

“Know ye not, brethren (for I speak to them that know the law), how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter.”

BEGINNING with the first verse of this section, we observe that there were two classes of persons in the Church at Rome, to both of whom the writer addresses himself, namely, Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. They were all dear to him, and therefore are all saluted as “brethren,” without distinction. It is supposed, however, that the parenthetical clause is

meant as a compliment to the Jewish part of the Church familiar with the Mosaic law. Knowing the general character of Paul, we are willing to accept this view. The words do not oblige us to receive it, especially if we drop the article *the* out, which is wanting in the original. Then it would read, "I speak to them that know law," that live in refined society. Of course, the Roman Christians knew law as well as the Jews. Yet we know that the writer embraced every occasion of conciliating his own people. He never entirely threw off the religious nationality to which he was born. The Jewish element, ever and anon, betrays itself in his writings. The law, as given by Moses, is likely to be the law alluded to, for this was both uppermost and undermost in his mind. Also it must be the moral law that is meant. No law else could operate in the manner indicated in this chapter and throughout the epistle. Mere ritual or ceremony has no such power. Though it is moral law that is meant, yet it is that as coming from the pen of Moses. Paul never loses sight of the system in which he was trained and educated. "Behold thou art called a Jew, and restest in the *law*, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest His will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the *law*."¹

The position laid down at the head of this section is *that the law is commensurate with life, but has no*

(1) Rom. ii, 17, 18.

force beyond it. “The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth,” or over a woman as long as she liveth. The term “man” must be taken as including both sexes. The example immediately following requires this. In respect of moral obligation there is neither male nor female. A distinction so accidental cannot affect the power of the law. In the case of either man or woman the force of the law ceases at death. Besides the instance given in the text we may supply many others. We will suppose one. A youth calculating on long life makes choice of a vocation in which he intends to win an honest livelihood, and, if possible, an honourable name. That he may master the duties of his business he engages himself to serve seven years under a master, who, on his part, undertakes to make him proficient, and to requite his services with a salary agreed upon. Within one year after the indentures are signed the young man sickens and dies, leaving six years of his bond unhonoured. The master may feel aggrieved, and complain of the wrong done to him; but what redress is there? There is no bench of justice that can touch the case. Death is above the laws, and can cancel the most formal and solemn engagements. The master might die and leave his apprentice raw and unfurnished for his work—short of the skill he engaged to help him to. Then the youth might complain of injustice, but to no purpose. The master cannot come out of his grave to complete his engagement. “The law hath

dominion over a man" only "as long as he liveth." Neither master nor servant has any security against the law of mortality, which operates without respect to man's plans or purposes.

The relationship borrowed by Paul to illustrate his position is the strongest and most agreeable of all earthly ties. It is a life-long bond, and cannot properly wear out or expire by the lapse of years. "The woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he liveth." It is equally true that the husband is bound by the law to his wife as long as *she* liveth. At least this is true viewed in the light of the original intent of the marriage law in its first appointment, apart from an unworthy permission introduced to obviate difficulty created by headstrong passion—"hardness of heart." Divorce is a disgraceful accident, which only comes in when the genuine law has been violated. The bond is mutual. But it suited the writer's purpose better to take a one-sided view of the obligation. Had he been inculcating the duties of the relationship he would not have failed to lay the burden of obligation as heavily upon the husband as upon the wife. As it is only for rhetoric or logic that he makes reference to the law of marriage, a little inexactness is of less consequence. To show the propriety of a new religious economy coming in, and being cheerfully accepted, it suited his convenience to suppose the death of the husband, as leaving the woman at liberty for a second marriage. And yet

this creates an inconvenience in another respect, which he is obliged to obviate by a rhetorical device. He means the husband to stand for the law. He intends the wife to represent the parties to whom he was writing, or human beings in general, over whom the law holds a husband's authority. Then in the figure he says the husband is dead, but he does not carry this out in the application; there he says "ye are become dead," which is as good as saying that the wife is dead. To make his similitude complete, he should have said "the law, your husband, is dead, and ye are free." He seems studiously to avoid saying this. To say that the law was dead might appear to him irreverent. The death of either party sufficing to dissolve the marriage bond, he sweeps round in the opposite direction, and saves himself from putting the case in that unworthy view. This is the best adjustment of the difficulty we can make. Figures are not sufficiently plastic to shape exactly to the truth which they are intended to delineate. If they agree to it in some main point, small incongruities must not be heeded.

Why is the obligation of the husband to fidelity ignored? Is not a man as much bound by the marriage contract as a woman? The first deliverance on the subject in sacred writ is concerning *the man*. It binds him to a steady adherence to marriage duty. It makes the wife's claims paramount, authorizing him, if needful, to neglect other dear relations in preference to her. "Therefore shall a man leave his

father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.”¹ The original order was one man and one woman, and the bond was life-long. There was no promise made for another order of things. In process of time degeneracy brought in a different usage, but the Christian law approves that which was “from the beginning.” Why, then, did not the Apostle say: “The man which hath a wife is bound by the law to his wife so long as she liveth?” We are bolder to ask this, since he begins with the man in the first verse, “The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth.” It was easy to go on and show that the man was bound, as he had just been named. Singularly enough the writer loses sight of him, and completes his illustration by affirming the woman’s subjection! It has been supposed that this departure from the order, begun in the first verse, arises out of Oriental custom, which has relaxed the force of God’s law, and given to the husband a power it denies to the wife. He may dismiss her, but she cannot dismiss him. This we submit, not for the reader’s acceptance, but for consideration.

It is to be understood that *we* stand in the place of the wife. The law is represented as the husband; such is the figure. In philosophical strictness we look higher than to the law. It is impersonal, and cannot receive from us any expression of love or act of obedience; nor can it make us any returns of favour or approval.

(1) Gen. ii. 24.

Properly, it is to *God* that we are subject, under a legal covenant in the first instance ; and that failing, then under a gracious economy, divinely contrived and provided. In the second state it is the same Person we are subject to, but upon a new bond of union. Neither is the old bond ruthlessly treated or dishonoured as if it had been wrong, or bad, or unsuitable. In man's primal state it was well adapted to him. In consequence of the fall it is abrogated. Its abrogation has taken place under such circumstances and conditions as effectually guard it from unworthy reflections. It opens no door to lawlessness. As a covenant it is set aside. As a rule of conduct it is still in force. There is perfect security for good behaviour, as we are "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ."

Our freedom from the law is indicated in the words, "Ye also are become dead to the law." For uniformity's sake it ought to have been put that the law was dead and we were free by consequence. It is thus that a widow's freedom comes. "If her husband be dead she is free." There being reasons for avoiding such a wording as that the law was dead the same end is answered by putting it "ye are become dead." Being dead we are free. Death looses all fetters and ends all obligations. It is the living who are subjects and servants under bonds and engagements. Even those who hold high position and enjoy distinguishing immunities are nevertheless subject to the

laws of the living world. The dead are released. Their warfare is accomplished and their harness laid aside. Their term of servitude has expired. The grave is the house of liberty. "The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master."¹

We are free from its condemning power. We affirm this of those who accept Christ, and of none else. Till we give our hand to Him in the gospel covenant, the law holds its right in us, and claims to inflict on us its penalty. If we persist in living in the house of bondage under the legal regime, there is nothing for us but condemnation. Under the roof of the law sinners can only expect a hard life and hopeless death. The order of the house once broken there is no more peace. It is better for us to escape to the gospel house, whence the law cannot bring us back, nor do us harm. Under safe-guard with Jesus we come under a new rule of justification. We hold by the skirts of our great law-fulfiller. Hidden behind Him, the law cannot touch us. Encompassed with the virtue of His atonement, and standing within the sanctuary of His blood, justice cannot reach us. If the law has anything to say about damages or reparation due on our account, let it speak to Him. He is able to answer it. It has no right to talk to us. We cannot hear it or take any notice of what it has to say. We are *dead* to the law. Let it deal with our living substitute. He will silence its threats, and

(1) Job iii. 19.

maledictions and menaces. It has no more right to trouble us than a creditor has to disturb his dead debtor in his grave, who has an able bondsman alive. The dead cannot be responsible for anything. The law can only treat with the living.

We are free from its provoking power. To a depraved nature the law has no conservative or sanctifying virtue. Its tendency is rather to make bad worse, and to multiply transgression. "Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound."¹ Finding man under the dominating rule of sinful passions, it excites him to deeds of disobedience. The antinomian principle in the heart, aroused by sharp contact with the law, overleaps the fence and stalks forth on forbidden ground, committing all manner of excess. The law is not answerable for this. Its purpose is to restrain evil. The increase of sin is not its design, but an accidental effect. A healing power is wanted, distinct from the law operating upon our disordered nature, and bringing it into a healthy condition. Then the law is no longer offensive or provoking. Conversion is the cure for its exasperating influence. The heart made better by grace ceases its rebellion. The opposition dies. It requires two sides to wage war. If "ye are dead to the law" it cannot provoke you, for the dead cannot be excited or prompted to action. It depends much on the character of the inward change which accompanies our

(1) Rom. v. 20.

justification whether or not the law exercises a disturbing power over us. If that change be deep and full, the power of the law is well broken. If it be superficial or partial, leaving dregs of evil in the heart, the law will be troublesome in that proportion. Its power can only be nullified by our turning away from legal considerations, and opening our hearts to the new motivity supplied in the gospel scheme.

Liberation from the law could not be effected in a lawless manner irrespective of rectitude. Hence the Apostle is careful to add the needful explanation, "Ye are become dead to the law *by the body of Christ.*" By His crucified body our liberty came. A death was necessary to relax the hold which the law had upon us. The *law* could not die: it must be honoured. *We* could not die, and yet survive the penalty. The death due falling upon us would be our undoing. If we could have exhausted our punishment, and looked up again to life and happiness, interposition might have been forborne, consistently with our ultimate good. This being impossible, the body of Christ came between us and the penalty due. We are "reconciled in the body of His flesh through death."¹ His body was "prepared" for this purpose. "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."² "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree."³ We died by proxy. As the *law* could not die, and Jesus would not have us die,

(1) Col. i. 22.

(2) Heb. x. 10.

(3) 1 Pet. ii. 24.

He died for us. Can justice desire more ? The rigorous law that has us in its terrible grasp relaxes its hold of us at the foot of the cross.

The dissolution of one covenant is effected with a view to the formation of another. "That ye should be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead." The old bond being annulled, there is freedom to enter into a new one. It is commonly thought that first marriages are the most natural, agreeable, and happy, as they are the first promptings of love, when the heart is young and rich in affection ; whereas second marriages are more matters of policy, convenience, or interest. Well, it may be either way. A first marriage is unhappy, when the parties are not suited to each other, which is our case in relation to the law. It is, therefore, a great mercy that a death has occurred, dissolving the bond. The second marriage, which is proposed and urged on our attention, has infinitely more love and grace about it than the first had. It promises happier life, and greater wealth and honour. The way is perfectly open to it now that Christ has become the end of the law. There are no barriers in the road except such as we create by our own wilfulness and unwillingness to be won. We must forget the former things, and part with our legal notions. No lingering or hankering after the law, as our ground of trust, is consistent with the new arrangement. It is done with entirely in that view. And we must feel and believe that it is honourably dispensed

with. It is not by doubtful or discreditable divorce that we are free, but by a *death* publicly declared and acknowledged. There need be no conscientious scruples about the propriety of taking such a step. It may be done in open day, and in the face of heaven and earth. There is no ground for shame.

We go a step further. Not only we *may* be married according to the new covenant but we *ought* to be. But for the serious and awful power of free-will that we have about us it might be put more strongly—we *must* be married again. We forbear saying it so forcibly, as there can be no violation of the right of personal consent. At any rate we ought to become Christians. If we do not we will be liable to a penalty as severe as if the old bond still hold us. We are not in like condition with the widow who is free to be affianced again, or free to remain single, and without fault either way. She may live her own master, and pass her remaining days in grave and dignified widowhood, without doing wrong or losing ground in public opinion. Our case is different. There is no such thing as moral widowhood free from both law and gospel. The first bond is only dissolved as the second is accepted. Our responsibility to God cannot be laid aside. In consideration of our sinful condition He has accommodated us by the introduction of a system of grace adapted to us. If that is not accepted we must remain under the old rule, and perish.

“Even to Him who is raised from the dead.” This clause looks back to some earlier expressions about the husband being dead, and his authority ceasing in consequence. The death of Christ serves to loosen the law’s hold of us; and His resurrection, whilst it shows the satisfactoriness of His atoning work, renders Him eligible to take the place of the abolished law, and exercise over us a gracious rule. His claim is beyond dispute. To this end He both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord. Owing to His superiority over death the contract reaches into and overspreads a coming eternity. “I will betroth thee unto Me for ever.” He will endow His church with life everlasting. “Because I live ye shall live also.”¹

The happiest results are consequent upon this union —“That we should bring forth fruit unto God.” The church, as a fertile vine, brings forth much fruit by which the Father is glorified. Our prayers, and praises, and holy musings; our tender charities within and beyond the household of faith; our upright, just, and equitable proceedings in the market and in the world; in a word all our actions and movements bearing the impress of rectitude,—these are the offspring of grace. If we are asked, how we came by them, we are ready to answer: they are the children which God hath graciously given to us in the new covenant of grace. We acknowledge Him to be their source, and we make Him their end. “Thou also hast wrought all our works in us.”²

(1) John. (2) Isa. xxvi. 12.

The fifth and sixth verses are a contrast between the first and second marriage. As far as good result is concerned the first is a failure. Instead of promoting our happiness and making us conformable to the divine will, it only reveals our misery and provokes us to fresh acts of disobedience. We must either say that the union is abortive, or if productive, the offspring is dead-born, or doomed to an early grave. In a sinful world like ours nothing lives where the law holds sway. Tied to it we can do nothing but dead works. Our fairest actions have a deadly element in them : "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed ? for the end of those things is death."¹ Such fruit is worse than barrenness. Better than this could not be expected. Under a broken law, and with a depraved heart, what else could come ? Could we be better, in our outward living, than our minds and motives ? "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."² "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."³ "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."⁴ The law could not stir degenerate man to noble action. Its influence was rather to irritate him to sin. The motions of sins were by the law. "The strength of sin is the law."⁵ The more the law acts the more vigorously sin works in the members, which become tools of evil. The sooner such a connection is broken the better.

(1) Rom. vi. 21. (2) Prov. xxiii. 7. (3) John iii. 6. (4) Rom. viii. 8.
(5) 1 Cor. xv. 56.

The contrast to this is cheering. “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter:” “delivered from the law,” or, better, *loosed* from the law,” as it is the same word so rendered in the second verse. Also we accept the marginal reading, “being dead to that wherein we were held,” as preferable to the textual, “that being dead wherein we were held.” The ablest scholars adopt it into the text. The difference of the two readings lying in a single letter, and that also a vowel letter, mistake was easy. Besides, such pains having been taken immediately before, to avoid saying that the law was dead, it is not probable that the author would so soon forget himself, and carelessly dictate to his clerk an expression about which he had been so scrupulous.

“That wherein we were held” was the law, by which we are held no longer when we accept of Christ. We were held—retained as in durance or bondage. We lived the life of prisoners in a dark house, a gloom overhanging us in all we did. There is a happy alteration now. Whether we compare our new life with our life of open sin, or with the Pharisaic religion we once followed, the difference is as broad as between a prison and a free home. We serve God in newness of spirit. Our sins being forgiven, brings us a sweet enlargement. The love of Christ dictates our obedience—not the dread of penalty. We work *from* life,

not *for* life. We do our religious duties, not that we may be forgiven, but because we have been forgiven. We do not follow the law-book with its harsh orders, but the promptings of a "free spirit" of love, which knows no weariness in its efforts to please Him who espoused us.

To the readers of these lines we say, in conclusion, let us strive to enjoy the privileges to which we were born from above. Let us cherish the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. We are nobly married. Although our husband is of a nobler stock than we, and all the wealth and glory of the house came by Him, it is His wish that we should feel ourselves one with Him, and dismiss all abject fear from our hearts. "And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call Me Ishi (my husband), and shalt call Me no more Baali (my Lord)." ¹

(1) Hos. ii. 16.

DISCOURSE XVI.

THE LAW VINDICATED.

ROMANS vii. 7-13.

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which was good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."

AFTER so much said in the foregoing verses against the law as a rule of justification, it was natural to foreclose an objection that might be made to its character. As it is set forth under the notion of a husband ruling with a strictness ill-suited to our moral feebleness, it was needful to guard its honour and rectitude. The law had just been named as stimulating sinful passion, and propelling the mind to sinful action, and to the production of deadly fruit. Such is the import of the

fifth verse. Under a legal economy no better issue could be looked for. This being so, the writer asks the questions at the beginning of the seventh verse, or he personates some objector asking them. It is of small consequence whether we take them as from himself, or suppose them proceeding from some one hostile to his doctrine. They are necessary to the argument in hand.

If the marriage treated of in the earlier verses was unhappy, where was the blame? Was the fault with the wife or with the husband? Or was there blame on both sides? Only one of the parties was culpable. Our offences against the law made it disagreeable to us. Our condition as descendants of one who by a violation of the law lost his original nobility and purity, makes the yoke between us and the law unequal. The fall had a disabling effect, not only on him who fell, but on us also, begotten after the fall, so that we are no proper match for the law. We cannot keep pace with it. We limp and get out of step as we strive to keep abreast of it. And as its perfect rectitude will not admit of its stooping to accommodate us, or relaxing to suit our slow, uneven motions, it comes to pass that we are vexed, and chafed, and dissatisfied, and the law gets a bookfull of accusations against us. It is too swift and too exact, too erect and measured in its gait for us. "Can two walk together except they be agreed."¹ We may bewail this discordancy

(1) Amos iii. 3.

between us and the unbending law, but we cannot justly reproach it, or lay the fault at its door. However this accident has occurred, the wrongness lies on our side of the house. We have no right to quarrel with our husband, nor to breathe a syllable against his character. All we can say is that he is perfect and right, and we are not worthy of him. On account of our proneness to evil the offspring of this union are all foredoomed to death and condemnation. The attempt to live well and happy, and keep on good terms with God, under an economy of strict law is indeed "a sore travail." "The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days."¹ Our works are only "dead works." Yea, and we the workers earn death for ourselves, and will share the same fate as our works unless we procure a timely divorce, a course which is open to us, and to which we are urgently persuaded. The legal economy is a mortifying failure. It did not answer even with Adam, though in a better condition than we. He was abreast of the law, and had capacity and moral goodness commensurate with its demands. With his degenerate children it has never answered. Throughout all our generations to the world's end it will be a failure. But because the law is associated with unworthiness, it should not therefore suffer in our esteem. If a worthy man be ill-mated, his wife being of such a temper and character that she cannot live at peace with him, let not the public misjudge

(1) Job xv. 20.

him ; let him be seen in his own light. "What shall we say, then ? Is the law sin ?" The emphatic reply is "*me genito*," which our translation renders freely, "God forbid !" The law is all right—indeed, it is the standard and rule of right. Persons who keep short weights and measures are disposed to find fault with it, for no other reason than that it detects their false dealing. The law is never right for those who wish to live wrong. The precious sunlight is offensive and troublesome to weak eyes. When we hear a worthless woman berate her husband and cry out against him as being hard upon her, restricting her liberties and abridging her indulgences, if we know his good character we know what to think. Her noisy accusations only betray her own faultiness, and leave her husband's honour unsoiled.

The law cannot be the cause of that which it simply reveals. The officers of the law cannot be saddled with the blame of the prisoner's violation of social order. Most convincingly they make him *know* his offence ; but he is the sinner, and they are blameless. Moreover sin is known before its commission, by the letter of the law, set before the eye, or pronounced in the ear of those who are bound to obedience. Sin and the law, though strongly antithetic, are correlatives. "Sin is the transgression of the law."² So the one is made manifest by the other. As early as the third chapter in this same epistle the relationship of

(2) 1 John iii. 4.

the two things is distinctly affirmed. "By the law is the knowledge of sin."⁸ The one is related to the other just as the square or the plummet is to bad workmanship. After a careless workman has reared a crooked wall, and the inspector with plumbline in hand finds it several inches out of perpendicular, and condemns it, it is wrong to blame the plumbline as the cause of the wall being crooked ; the workman should blame his own negligence for what is done. His work will have to come down and be re-built. The sun is not the cause of the filthiness of the apartment into which it shines ; the filth was there before the light streamed in. The law is not easily satisfied. It blinks nothing either great or small. It carries its inspecting light deep into the recesses of the heart ; meddles with motives, desires and inclinations ; and demands rectitude and proportion in them all. It is something distinct from a man's self. There is indeed a law in man. He need not go wrong for want of light ; he has a general idea of right and wrong. But he has misleading passions, which obscure the light and drown the voice of conscience, and pervert his intellect so that he confounds things which differ, and reverses his ideas of good and evil. A law external to himself is wanted, to correct the perversions of passion, and to tutor him in the finer points of the inner life. Many a man who knows that the outward offence is wrong will excuse himself for evil tempers and antinomian dispo-

(8) Rom. iii. 20.

sitions. If only he does not steal or kill, or commit adultery—though his breast is alive with anger, covetousness and lawless desire—he will bless himself as a decent man, and a worthy observer of God's law. This false estimate vanishes as soon as he sets himself alongside the law. Then he knows sin in its root and essence because the law says, "Thou shalt not covet." This carries a candle into the inner chambers of the mind, and condemns as sinful the passions out of which the overt action comes. We must not kill; but neither must we hate. We must not steal; neither must we desire to possess what is another's. This tenth commandment seems to stand at the end of the whole, as a guard upon the other nine, any one of which may be violated in the spirit, even when kept in the letter. This was the fine point, which was too deep for Paul to learn without the law. "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

From the seventh verse forward the writer makes use of the first person singular. This is a habit with many a public teacher when he does not mean himself only. It is a matter of convenience to accommodate his hearers. We have no hesitation in saying that Paul speaks his own experience to the close of this chapter, as also in the commencement of the next. If we are asked whether it was his experience prior or subsequent to his conversion, we answer, it was probably both, as a careful examination of the whole chapter

will show. No one ever becomes a Christian without an inward realization of what is depicted in this chapter. It may be realized in some with less force and fulness than in others ; differences of shade or degree will arise from natural temperament or other accidents, whilst all are conformed in some measure to the model. The apostle makes an example of himself for our edification, by turning himself inside out, that we may see how law and grace act upon a sinful creature for his restoration.

Verse 8. "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Occasion means opportunity, convenience, fitting time or circumstance, of which advantage is taken to do a thing that could not have been done so soon or so easily, if at all. For example a door where one wishes to enter may be firmly shut. The person desiring admission may not have sufficient strength to effect an entrance. But someone comes up who is entitled to enter, and easily succeeds to open the door. Then the hesitating waiter, who is lingering near, watches his chance, and passes in. So sin lies at the door, ready to start up and enter when occasion offers. We name this simply as an illustration, and not as an exact similitude. It would not bear close pressing, for sin is not in the position supposed—it is more within than without. When it sallies forth into outward manifestation, the external sign is mere accident, the evil is internal. When either saints or sinners trace

their offences to external circumstance, and blame this or that for a wrong thing which they do, it argues an undistinguishing blindness, and a self-justifying disposition. If the wind had not blown from the east or the west, or some intermediate point, their mill would not have been set agoing. This is true enough ; but there must have been a predisposition to work evil—a strong propensity to the forbidden deed—or the occasion would not have been so eagerly embraced. The mill-wands were set and spread ready for the occasion. Sometimes when circumstances are unfavourable, occasion is sought and made. Where the bias to sin is strong, the depraved mind invents and hunts opportunity and studies plans and ways for its gratification.

According to the common punctuation in this verse, it is the presence of the commandment impinging on the mind that makes sin seethe and rage. It takes occasion by the commandment, as if it were provoked into action by its unwelcome voice. Instead of doing better for being admonished and instructed, the rebel runs into worse excess. He was bad before he was spoken to, but worse after. What then ? Is the magistrate chargeable with the rebellion he labours to quell ? Must he be tongue-tied because his words fall upon uncircumcised ears ? To blame him for the riot made by mutinous passions would be a serious mistake. The voice of authority is entitled to be uplifted whether men will hear or forbear ; yea, even though it

should prove like oil upon fire, and provoke a greater flame. The legal officer must read the riot-act, even if the noisy rabble grow more tumultuous upon hearing it. The result affirmed in the text might occur by the commandment destroying hope as well as by inciting opposition. The dejected mind when it has plunged deep into sin and knows that a penalty is due, is apt to grow reckless, and go on defiant of consequence; so, by frowardness, or by despondency the same goal is reached, and by the one as readily as by the other, if nothing beyond the law is looked to for a happy alternative.

There is another punctuation of this verse recommended by critics which rather alters the meaning, but without disturbing the main sense. The said pointing puts a comma after the word "occasion." Then it reads, "But sin, taking occasion, by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Or transposed, "But sin, taking occasion, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence by the commandment." According to this punctuation the occasion may be taken, as it is actually taken, from any source or circumstance, and from many different points. The commandment itself is not spoken of as the occasion. Sin takes occasion,—whence, it is not said,—but just it takes occasion from somewhere, and works evil desire into intensity, the commandment incidentally helping the result. This way of explaining has very scholarly names in its favour, and finds

an argument in the punctuation of the original, so far as that may carry weight.

“All manner of concupiscence,” or all manner of unlawful desire. The lexicon says on the word, “in bad sense, *desire, lust.*” It looks back upon the clause “Thou shalt not covet.” Yet it takes a wider range than the desire of money or property. It includes passion of every kind antagonist to law and equity.

“For without the law sin was dead,”—without the action of the law on his mind, it was quiet, dormant, or latent. He says “dead.” He is accustomed to use strong words. We understand him as if it slept like a slumbering animal that might be roused by the stamp of a foot or the creak of a door. So, when the wind is hushed, the ocean sleeps quietly in its bed, capable, however, of being roused and tossed into foam and fury by a blast from any point. Touched by the law, sin wakes to vigorous action. “The strength of sin is the law.”¹

Ver. 9. “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” “Without the law” indicates a state about which several inappropriate things have been written, as, that Paul was without law in his childhood, or that he was without law till instructed by Gamaliel, or that he was without law in Adam. Waving these notions as irrelevant, we regard the period of his being without the law as including the whole of his life till he

came under that potent influence that issued in his becoming a Christian. Prior to that he had indeed much to do with the law in a certain sense. His ears had been accustomed to hear it, and his lips to repeat it, and his mind to ponder it. It was his glory and boast, and engaged the ardour of his demonstrative nature. But he did not understand its spirituality, or feel its condemning power till the commandment "came," that is, till it broke in upon his conscience and disturbed him with the conviction that he was altogether wrong. So we say a matter *comes home* to a man when it deeply affects him. Accordingly, we think that Saul of Tarsus was without the law during the whole period of his Pharisee life.

"Alive" imports as much as happy, hopeful, strong in a good opinion of himself. In love with himself, he felt no alarm or disquiet. So a prosperous man is alive when his business seems to flourish and his gains to multiply. Why should he not hold up his head when his ships bring home profitable cargo and his business clears a satisfactory sum year by year? His bearing is that of a prosperous merchant. And if the surface of his affairs reported him truly, he would be entitled to look up; but some underlying rottenness of which he is incognisant breaks forth. Neglected matters turn up, throwing light upon his real condition. It comes out that he is a broken man. The law assails him and strips him of his glory. His bearing

is quite altered. You see no longer the erect figure, the beaming face, the elastic step and bold port that distinguished him so lately. The law has crushed him. The application of this is obvious. A blind sinner, full of false peace and self-satisfaction, feels no misgiving or self-displacency, till the commandment, exceeding broad and spiritual, assails his conscience, convicting him of neglects and positive offences numberless. Then he becomes crest-fallen, and receives the sentence of death in himself. Sin revives and he dies. He is in double difficulty, unable to answer the past or to meet the future. “The young man saith unto him, All these things have I have kept from my youth up; what lack I yet? Jesus saith unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me. But when the young man heard that saying he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.”¹

Ver. 10. “And the commandment which *was ordained* to life I found *to be* unto death.” The commandment is no enemy or bar to human happiness. Nay, it not only does not hinder, it actually helps, a man’s proper good, and that not by accident but by design. If was meant for life. The verb *ordained* is an intruder in the text, though it does good service. If you delete it, the text loses none of its force, but wants smoothness. “The commandment which (*was*)

(1) Matt. xix. 20–22.

to life I found to be unto death." For easy reading a supply is wanted which may be *ordained, designed, intended*, or some such term. The particle rendered "to" indicates tendency as well as purpose. There is life in the law for obedient subjects. "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, which, if a man do, he shall live in them; I am the Lord."¹ That death has resulted is an accident which was neither desired nor designed. The best things may be turned aside from their original by sin. The gospel itself is a savour of life or a savour of death, just as it is received or rejected.

The eleventh verse, keeping in view the same agent or factor,—sin,—shows the process by which the unhappy result was attained. It is said previously "sin revived, and I died," nothing being named as to how death was effected. Now two new words appear in the text, describing *how* it was done. Sin *deceived* me and *slew* me by means of the law. These terms naturally bring to mind the prototype of all sin, the first transgression, in which deception played a leading part. The old serpent, the devil, beguiled Eve through his subtlety, and turned the holy commandment into a murderous weapon. He uttered specious insinuations and bold assertions till the woman was deceived. The same tempter is at work now. Moreover, there is within the natural man a proneness to evil, which of itself deceives him, and by which he is

(1) Lev. xviii. 5.

drawn into forbidden action and slain. The old man has deceitful lusts. Like Solomon's strange woman, sin has bewitching ways. "Her ways are moveable."¹ So crafty a special pleader easily persuades us that the precept of the law is too high, or that the penalty will never follow the breach of it. Then we yield, and get our eyes opened only to behold our misery.

A conclusion is now formally expressed, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." The three properties affirmed of the commandment are all to be understood of the law, although only the first of them is expressly predicated of it. The law and the commandment are only distinguishable as the whole and a part. The law, the whole body of it, is holy, and just, and good. The commandment, some one, each one, everyone, is holy, and just, and good. Collectively and separately it is all right and excellent. Is it fanciful, if we say that the three qualities named refer respectively to the parties concerned,—God, my neighbour and myself? It is holy, insisting on a reverent and devout deportment towards God; just, requiring equitable dealing with one another; and good, profitable in its bearing on individual happiness.²

Gliding on from the last word, "good," a question follows, "Was then that which is good made death unto me?" Then comes his abhorrent denial, "God forbid." The good law was not the cause of death, but

(1) *Prov. v. 6.* (2) *Psalm xix. 7—11.* *Mic. vi. 8.* *1 Tim. i. 8.*

sin was. There is such an abrupt ellipsis in this thirteenth verse that we cannot extract a meaning out of it without supplying a clause. But that clause is furnished in the Apostle's own words, so the whole verse might stand advantageously thus—"Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin *was made death unto me*, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." Sin is the factor, and death is its work. So bad is it in its nature, that it makes use of so good a thing as the law in effecting such bad work. It works a bad work by a good instrument. Hereby it is exhibited in its real nature as immeasurably and monstrously evil. It appears odious, hateful, and vile beyond all degree. The original expresses it as *hyperbolically* sinful. Hence it is compared to itself. "But sin *was made death unto me* that it might appear sin." It is as bad as itself, because there is nothing worse by which to compare it. It is out of all proportion and order, perverting whatever it touches, even so good and holy a thing as the commandment.

How important it is that we should individually and personally realize the state of mind indicated in this section of Scripture! Painful and distasteful as conviction of sin is, cutting to inches a man's selfcomplacency and laying him in the dust of self-abasement, it is, notwithstanding, the best thing that can befall him, if only he takes the right course and seeks help

in Christ who is the end of the law for righteousness. Although we do not favour a long process of conviction, we cannot but think that a sharp strife of remorse in the soul is a hopeful token. There will be a better growth in Christian holiness where there has first been a conviction sufficiently pungent to make sin bitter. As one who has written well on this epistle says, "If our religious experience does not correspond with that of the people of God, as detailed in the Scriptures, we cannot be true Christians. Unless we have felt as Paul felt, we have not the religion of Paul, and cannot expect to share his reward."¹

(1) Hodge.

DISCOURSE XVII.

INTERNAL CONFLICT.

ROMANS vii. 14—16.

"For we know that the law is spiritual : but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good."

THERE are differing opinions maintained concerning this passage by persons adhering to different schools of theology. The point debated is, whether it is a description of experience prior to conversion or after it. Some regard it as the portrait of a man under conviction of sin, struggling beneath a burden of guilt, and contending against a force of depravity which overmasters all his attempts at reformation, and leaves him powerless for good. Contrary to this, others hold it to be the experience of a regenerate man under a consciousness of inborn corruption which contact with the law has awakened into action and discovered to him. He is already under the rule of grace, different from what he was, but conscious of deficiency, and worse, of positively evil inclination, and even of wrong action, as it is said, "what I hate that do I." He is

dissatisfied with himself both in relation to doing and not-doing as the sequel shows. If we were pushed to express an opinion on this question, we would say that this section describes both our first experience when we are groping our way to the religious life and much of our experience after conversion also. There is much in the representation given common to both states. There are some things said that appear inapplicable to the initiatory stage of religious life, and others that we would hesitate to affirm of one well advanced. The language is very strong and sets forth in a full light, how the law acts on one whose heart is brought to grapple with it. It may be that some persons never experience anything so lively as this here, either in order to conversion, or subsequent to it, but something, though similar, less demonstrative. It is needless to affirm either side of the question. It is well known that many godly characters have passed through such a process more than once in their lives; and have eventually reached higher ground. On the other hand some have been so sharply and thoroughly dealt with in their first religious convictions and so radically changed, as never afterwards to experience such a painful moral conflict. Leaving this an open question, we pursue our exposition.

Verse 14. "For we know that the law is spiritual ; but I am carnal, sold under sin." The writer makes rather a sudden difference here in two respects. First he alters the pronoun from the first person singular to

the plural, and says "we," although he uses "I" for seven verses previous, and takes it up again and repeats it to the end of the chapter. The other difference is that for a considerable space before, he uses verbs in a past tense, saying "sin wrought in me," "sin revired and I died," "sin deceived me and slew me;" but now he changes to the present tense and says "that which I do," "what I hate," "I consent to the law," "I delight in the law." No doubt there are reasons for both these changes. It has been attempted to turn the word "we know" into "I know" by partitioning it in the middle, and making it into two words, *oida men* instead of *oidamen* which would render it uniform with the "I" so frequent before and after. Good scholars who understand the criticism of ancient manuscripts will not have it so. The "we" is quite proper and natural here, as the writer was addressing persons with whom he was in sympathy, and who had the same interest in Christian truth with himself. It is only a resumption of the earlier style of the chapter where he includes himself with them in this convenient and companionable word which occurs several times. When he uses the first person singular, it is only for convenience. Even then he keeps those to whom he writes in view, and makes an exhibition of himself for their benefit. He depicts his own personal state to lead them to perceive in him the counterpart of themselves. He was like a looking-glass in which they and the particular phase of truth

insisted on were reflected. As to the change of tense in the verbs, it may be just a matter of rhetoric to make his illustration more lively. All the time he speaks in the present to show his inner life in living colours, as actually going on, he still details what had taken place in the past.

“For we know”—a favourite form of expression with Paul. It is indicative of ascertained truth, admitted on all hands, at least by all to whom such a form of speaking is addressed. What we know is something beyond dispute, different from what is merely believed. Things known bear the stamp of science, not being simply probable or truth-like, but tested and verified, and free from doubt. We make what we know a point to argue from to something we are in search of, or seeking to establish. Accordingly, we might expect a man of a logical turn of mind like Paul to have this formula at hand. It is common with him. “*But we are sure* (that is, but we know, the same word as in our text) that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.”¹ “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law.”² “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.”³ What is now affirmed belongs to things that lie within the sphere of known truths. “We know that the law is *spiritual*.” Coming from God who is a Spirit, and

(1) Rom. ii. 2. (2) Rom. iii. 19. (3) Rom. viii. 28.

being, as is often said, a transcript of His nature, it cannot fail to be spiritual. We understand this to mean spiritual in its requirements. The word "spiritual" expresses a moral quality inhering properly in a person, and not to be understood subjectively of anything impersonal. "Ye which are spiritual restore such an one."¹ "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things."² It is by a licence that the law is pronounced spiritual. It demands of those subject to it a right state of heart. If it took note of outward conduct only concerning things to be done or not to be done, and condemned only what was manifested in word or deed, a world of iniquity in the breast might escape cognizance and penalty. The spirituality of the law is particularly manifested in the tenth commandment, as is instanced by Paul in this chapter. Had nothing more been required than to keep outward conduct right, the seventh commandment and the eighth would have sufficed. "Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal." Despite the inward workings of cupidity and concupiscence, we might have avoided putting forth our "hands unto iniquity," or outraging the sanctities of social life, and been credited by ourselves and others as good observers of the law. Yet in the sight of that eye that reads the heart we should still have been guilty, and held as violators of the law which says "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet

(1) Gal. vi. 1. (2) 1 Cor. ii. 15.

thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."¹ This commandment in abbreviated form is quoted at the seventh verse of this chapter. "Thou shalt not covet." Not only doing wrong, but desiring to do it is sin in the eye of God's law. Even by our fellowmen it is regarded as wrong, although civil law is incompetent to reach and punish it. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer,"² although he does him no violence. "For we know that the law is spiritual." Generally, men on whom the law has not shed its spiritual illumination have their own approval if they maintain the decencies of life. "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes ; but the Lord weigheth the spirits."³

Considered God-ward the law is spiritual. It demands for Him more than external conformity. The labour of our hands is acceptable only when accompanied by the love of our hearts. Even holy exercises which have a show of spirituality are offensive if they be not the expression of a devout heart. The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. To love Him is above all the display of devotion. To obey Him is more than the costliest oblations. "Exceeding broad" though His "commandment" is, its demands are covered by love generating an honest and earnest desire to please Him. "Behold Thou desirest truth in the inward parts : and in the hidden part

(1) *Exod. xx. 17.*(2) *1 John iii. 15.*(3) *Prov. xvi. 2.*

Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.”¹ And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”²

“But I am carnal”—have corrupt “motions” inwardly which carry me in wrong directions, and are a grief to me even if not yielded to, their nonconformity with the law being in itself sinful. If we refer this to the first struggle which a man has when he is convinced of sin, it is easy of admission. The flesh lusts against the spiritual law at that time, but does it beyond that stage of experience? Can a person in whom the religious life has commenced charge himself in consonance with the fact of having been regenerated? Yes. Whether the Apostle means so in this place or not, in his judgment the two states may co-exist. Such a position is assumed in his remonstrance with the Corinthian converts, who, though not the best specimens of Christian life, were acknowledgedly “in Christ.” “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions; are ye not carnal and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am

(1) Psalm li. 6. (2) Deut. xxx. 6.

of Apollos ; are ye not carnal ?" ¹ They were carnal, and yet "babes in Christ," carnal, and yet had "believed."

"Sold under sin" is another strong expression which we naturally hesitate to apply to a regenerate man. At first thought it seems more exceptionable than the clause "but I am carnal." The degrading word "sold" is applied in Old Testament narrative to persons abandoned to outrageous sin. It is said of one of the worst kings of Israel that he "sold himself to work evil," deliberately gave himself up under wife-influence to supplant the worship of God by the worst forms of idolatry. Our text exhibits a man, not who sold himself, but who was sold, and makes a bitter complaint concerning his condition. "But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up."² The whole of the ten tribes "sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord,"³ who in His anger sold them into the hands of a wicked world-power as a punishment for their apostacy. Their "Rock" often "sold them" and "shut them up" for discipline. So this word is no stranger in the Bible. Its earlier use sheds light on its application here.

There is a hint at military custom in the clause under consideration. As in the foregoing chapter there are couchant allusions to the soldierly vocation, so in this there is a "warring" named, and a "captivity"

(1) 1 Cor. iii. 1—4. (2) 1 Kings xxi. 25. (3) 2 Kings xvii. 17.

bewailed, and a deliverer desired. Sold *under sin* is equal to, sold into the power of sin, as when a prisoner of war is disposed of for money, he comes under the power of his purchaser. The description borrows that usage, making sin the master into whose hands the captive falls. The law sells him. So far from freeing him, it enslaves and involves him deeper than he had sunk before he knew it. A newly awakened sinner whose eyes are opened to see his danger, and desert, and vileness, and helplessness, feels all this. The more deeply he feels it, the better for him, provided also that he comes under grace. He may be all the clearer and more assured in his religious experience afterwards for his poignant convictions. If a regenerate man feels thus, it can only be occasionally, and bear reference chiefly to the state of the heart and to lighter sins. With more refined sensibilities and enlarged views of sin's evil nature and of the law's spirituality, he will deplore the existence of inward corruption and be grieved for those aberrations from rectitude, of which unregenerate men make no account.

Verse 15. "For that which I do I allow not : for what I would that do I not ; but what I hate that do I." In the original text the verb "do" which occurs in this verse three times, is not, as in the translation, the same word three times repeated, but is in every instance a different word. There is doubtless a real difference in the meaning of these verbs, though they all signify activity. Their shades of import are fine

withal, so that for practical value, variation in the rendering may not be absolutely necessary. Yet revisers have shown a disposition to make some distinction. We find the verse rendered—"For what I *perform* that I know not : for not what I desire, that *do* I ; but what I hate that I *do*."¹ "For that which I *do* I approve not : for I *practise* not that which I will ; but the things which I hate, those things I *do*."² "For that which I *do* I approve not ; for I do not *practise* what I would, but what I hate that I *do*."³ Uniting these translations made by respectable scholars, we have the three verbs all rendered differently. This is of importance for a critical reader.

"For that which I do I allow not." This is said to confirm and illustrate the previous statements that he was "carnal" and "sold under sin." The spirit of unwillingness and disapproval in which he did sin's work is quoted as proof that he was a sold man. What sin he performed was done with an ill grace, lacking a cheerful air, and executed in the temper of one who acts contrary to his own mind. He did not "allow" what he did. He gave it no hearty sanction. His hand and his mind were not in harmony. A slave is understood to do much of his work perforce. Pushed and watched and overborne, he does what otherwise he would not do. In the case before us it is not the amount of labour exacted that is nauseated, but the kind of work, the mind being in a state of

(1) Alford. (2) Doddridge. (3) Wesley.

dissent. "I allow not," my sense of right is offended with my own actions. "Allow" is a very good word for the purpose. The margin has, "I know not," which also is good, remembering that it is a verb freely applied in Scripture in a moral sense as to express a mental operation. To know means to perceive, to understand, to apprehend. Taking it in this way, some explain the clause as meaning—I know not what I do, as I am bewildered and confused, and cannot use the deliberation necessary to intelligent right action. I am hurried and goaded till I do not know what I am doing. We are not free to accept this view, for the man portrayed before us knows so well what he does, both the thing itself and the moral quality of it, that he is quite displeased with himself concerning it. We are bound to receive the marginal word, as it is the term by which the original is usually expressed; only we plead for its moral sense—approve, love, acknowledge. "But if any man love God, the same is *known* of Him,"¹ approved, regarded with favour. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord *knoweth* them that are His."² "And then will I profess unto them, I never *knew* you; depart from Me ye that work iniquity."³

"For what I *would*, that do I not; but what I *hate*, that do I." These two clauses are in antithesis. Something which the subject of this conflicting experience *does not*, is placed over something against which he

(1) 1 Cor. viii. 8.

(2) 2 Tim. ii. 19.

(3) Matt. vii. 23.

does: something which he *wills* or desires, is contrasted with something which he *hates* or dislikes. The emphasis in the first clause is on the word "would," a principal verb in the present tense meaning wish or desire rather than determination. The antithetic word "hate" is another strong term which need not, in the judgment of critics, be understood in the fullest force of which it is capable,—nay more, in this case ought not to be so understood. Something he "would" (loves) he fails to do, because his love is not intense enough. Something he "hates" (disapproves) he does notwithstanding his dislike, because he does not hate it "with a perfect hatred." Love and hatred are comparative terms. An object less loved is said to be hated, whilst another more loved in competition with it is said to be loved. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."¹ There may be conflicting inclinations, and a struggle before a decision is made. In that struggle there is often wavering and swerving, and alternating action. Apply this to the man who is beginning to debate the question in his mind, whether to serve God or Baal, you find little difficulty in admitting the representation. Accustomed as he has been to do wrong, and unused to right action, he finds himself woefully unapt when he wants to reform. "Cease to

(1) Matt. vi. 24.

do evil and learn to do well" is an order not so easily obeyed. He finds himself a practised hand at what he is ordered to "cease," and a raw apprentice at what he has to "learn." He is divided between ending one course of life and commencing another. Though a revolution is going on in his views and feelings, which makes sin appear hateful in his eyes and holiness lovely, his antecedents stand in his way and detain him. Perhaps he will for a little while do right and wrong by turns, till the oscillating scales in time become steady, and the balance beam inclines decidedly to rectitude.

Whether a good man can use this language as descriptive of his experience is a question. Are the things he "would" uniformly neglected, and the things he hates regularly performed? Does he omit all the good he would? Does he habitually perform what he hates? These questions are self-answered. In such case the difference between him and a bad man would be small—this only, that the one did evil with full consent, and the other under the drag of dissatisfaction. One who has in the main conquered evil may find a conflict in some things, even in some over which he has obtained victories before. The actual experience of many (not to say of all) confirms us in this view, and obliges us to accept it, unless we say that none of all these were really converted, a conclusion from which our charity shrinks.

The full conquest over evil, though not obtained

in one battle, is an object of aim, of desire, and hope—a privilege to be sought and obtained. The teachings of scripture instruct and encourage us on this matter. It contains prayers, exhortation and precept, and descriptions of character indicating eventual triumph, temporary conflict being supposed. We find amongst its prayers these—“Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”¹ “Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions Thou shalt purge them away.”² “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.”³ Scripture precepts and exhortations are to the same purpose. “Be perfect,” “Sin not,” “Abstain from all appearance of evil,” “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Descriptions of a high state of grace are abundant. “They also do no iniquity; they walk in his ways.” “Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments.”⁴ This is not usually attained at once, and certainly is not acquired by motive or influence derived from law which only stirs up sin into strength without empowering us to conquer it. We need our hearts “enlarged” by gospel truth and grace to reach this

(1) Psalm xix. 12, 18. (2) Psalm lxv. 8. (3) 1 Thess. v. 23.
(4) Psalm cxix. 8, 6.

happy freedom. Yet the law is in no blame. It is its very excellence which is the occasion of this sad but wholesome effect.

Ver. 16. “If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.” If he does what the law forbids it might be argued that he objects to it as something evil and inequitable, which cannot be observed and ought not to be exacted. Such an inference would be hasty. His inward emotions, and the judgment he passes on himself, must be taken into account. The right enquiry is, not what actions he performs, but in what spirit he executes them—whether with the full consent of his mind, his heart revelling and rioting in them, or with much inward objection, despising himself the while as the slave of unworthy passion. This latter supposition is the basis of the writer’s argument, and fairly supports his conclusion. “If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.” “I consent”—agree with, bear witness to, the law, speak as it speaks, and condemn myself for nonconformity to it in every instance, in its highest demands and minutest details, both in spirit and letter. To be grieved over failures and occasional offences, even the slightest, is as true a testimony to the law as to rejoice in meeting its claims. “It is good.” It has been already pronounced so in the context, once in the twelfth verse, and twice in the thirteenth, but here it is declared “good” by a different word (*kalos*)

with a shade of signification in favour of the law, as something *beautiful* and *noble*, not merely commanding your consent on the ground of utility, but challenging admiration, awaking sentiment, and gratifying moral taste.

As we advance verse by verse through this critical portion of scripture, we feel the difficulty of pronouncing it the language of an unconverted sinner, or even of one awakened seeking to begin a religious life. The high estimate put on the law, and the frank expression of self-condemnation dispose us to think of one who has some considerable experience in practical religion. Yet on a matter so much contested we forbear to dogmatize. The writer, or the person whom he represents, if any other than himself, is in condition to indorse the language of an inspired penman well advanced in saintliness. "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold ; yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right ; and I hate every false way."¹

(1) Psalm cxix. 127, 128.

